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15 – 20 May 2001

The Pastor as Missionary Leader

Speakers include:

Dr René Erwich, IBTS

Dr G A Pritchard, Willow Creek Seeker Services

We live in challenging times, when leadership both in the church and in mission are needed to help the church fulfil her missionary mandate.

Churches need missionary leaders

How can pastors be missionaries and lead the churches to a balanced missionary involvement in society and help to equip the people of God?

What kind of leadership does this involve?

What are the biblical and theological assumptions of this kind of leadership?

These questions and more will be on the agenda during this conference

Further information from:

Dr René Erwich – Email: Erwich@ibts.cz

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18 – 24 August 2001

Discipleship and Formation of Christian Character: A Baptist Vision

Speaker: **Dr Glen Stassen**, Fuller Seminary, California

Current research in ethics, theology and philosophy emphasises the importance of the story, of community life and of practice for the formation of the human character.

What is the Baptist formative story?

How does it transform Christian character?

Can Baptist life and beliefs make any difference in the pluralistic and fractured world of post-communist and post-modern Europe?

This conference will look at the contours of Christian character, reflecting on the reality of the Kingdom of God as seen in the gospels, and on the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, examining the path of radical discipleship. The conference will explore practical applications for Baptist life and for society in the 21st century.

Further information from:

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EDITORIAL

The editorial team at IBTS has been most encouraged by the response to the first issue of the *Journal of European Baptist Studies*. We have had enthusiastic comments about the concept of the journal and the content of the first issue. Readers may be interested to know that we have subscribers in Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Scotland, Sweden, Ukraine, the USA and Wales. On the basis of enquiries received we anticipate more subscribers from other countries in Europe and the Middle East.

This second issue contains articles with theological, missiological and historical themes. Dr David Brown's article was delivered early in 1999 as a paper at an important conference held here at IBTS on theological education in Europe. He has contributed a great deal himself to this task. There was a strong wish, especially on the part of the many eastern European theological educators at the conference, that Dr Brown's stimulating and provocative paper should be made available more widely.

The article by Dr René Erwich, 'Developing Missionary Congregations', reflects concerns for relevant, contextual mission which are also being taken up in the MTh course in Contextual Missiology at IBTS, of which Dr Erwich is the course Director. It is the view of those who are at the forefront of thinking about missiology that this is a ground-breaking course in the European evangelical world.

We are also delighted to be able to publish historical work on the experience of Baptists in the communist period. There is a massive amount to be researched in this area. The Revd Toivo Pilli's insightful article on Estonian Baptists was delivered as a paper at the International Conference on Baptist Studies held at Wake Forest University, North Carolina, in 1999. The article is being jointly published with *Baptist History and Heritage*.

The tribute to James Wm. McClendon, by Mark Thiessen Nation, reminds us that there are those, from time to time, who exercise a shaping influence on Christian thought. The Nordenhaugh Lectures (see page 50) are to be delivered this year by another formative thinker, Professor Miroslav Volf from Croatia, and we anticipate considerable interest in these lectures. We hope that the material published in this journal will contribute in different ways to reflections on the ways in which we engage in ministry and mission. We welcome offers of future articles and book reviews for the journal from those who are exploring issues of theology and practice that have relevance for Baptist life in Europe and the Middle East.

The Revd Dr Ian Randall

Director of Baptist and Anabaptist Studies, IBTS

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: FILLING A BOTTLE, PASSING A BATON, OPENING A DOOR

Introduction

There is a reference in Acts 4:13 to uneducated people having been capably engaged in church ministry since the day of Pentecost, and from the biblical record it looks as if the unschooled Peter had tremendous influence in those early years. This might raise serious questions about whether or not theological education is necessary. We also discover, however, that Paul was a church leader who was well educated (Acts 22:3), thus providing a different biblical model for trained leadership, and the one to which I want to give attention. It could be argued that the educated Paul had a more strategic and long-lasting influence on the Church than did Peter.

Of course, theological education has been evident almost from the beginning of biblical history. Old Testament faith was passed on from generation to generation, first within the home (Deut. 6:1-9; see 13:18-19), and then by trained religious leaders (as in Ezra 7:10). Jesus' three-year ministry was spent personally discipling his followers, and later, those Spirit-empowered believers discipled others (2 Tim. 2:2), both by teaching (Matt. 28:16-20) and example (1 Cor. 4:16, 11:1). But as church structures became more sophisticated, it became necessary to develop specific strategies that provided more capably trained leaders (as seen, for instance, in Acts 6:1-6, Eph. 4:11-13, 1 Tim. 3:1-13, and Titus 1:5-9). In general, education in New Testament times prepared individuals for ministry (as in Heb. 5:11-6:3; see 13:35-36), and scripture was the primary resource for disciple-making (2 Tim. 3:16-17; see 13:29-30).

After the canonical period, theological education continued. Pazmino speaks of 'unfulfilled eschatological expectations', that led to churches developing monastic schools, and in the 12th century establishing universities for the purpose of training church leaders.¹ Thus, the Church became more dependent on 'professional' leadership (by which I mean trained or paid) instead of relying only on 'amateurs' (those who do it only for love). In this way, trained leadership gradually emerged with the development of the Church.

¹ R W Pazmino. *Foundational issues in Christian education: an introduction in evangelical perspective*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988) pp. 128-131.

Today, the situation is no different, except that the need for theological education may be greater than at any other period of the Church's history. This is particularly true in certain areas of the European Baptist Federation. Speaking at the Jubilee of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in July 1999, Karl Heinz Walter, former General Secretary of the European Baptist Federation, reported on a recent meeting with a Siberian pastor who said, 'We are 78 years behind the West in theological education. Most of our pastors are uneducated, some with only 3 or 4 years of schooling at all. In fact, members of our congregations are more educated than we are. Under the Communist regime, people who were well-educated got government-appointed jobs (even those who were Christians), so those who had any education at all were taken away from the churches. Today, there are few educated pastors.'

Past attempts to meet this need relied on informal initiatives. Theo Angelov, current General Secretary of the European Baptist Federation and a respected Bulgarian pastor, tells of secret meetings he held in his church basement in the early 1980s. 15 young people gathered so 'we could lecture ourselves on theology'. By his own admission, it was not the best way, but it was the only option. Angelov used his father's small theological library of books for teaching (these were the only books available), and said that this same strategy was being carried out in secret everywhere in Eastern Europe. Untrained leaders were educating each other.

But we face a new generation, and old strategies of theological education must be reviewed. New wine needs new skins (Matt. 9:17). So, in the past 10 years, we have seen the development of many creative forms of theological education in Europe and the Middle East. These programmes are effectively training pastors and church leaders, against a background of a severe lack of qualified national teachers, written resources, and financial means. In many cases, theological education simply cannot be done using traditional programmes, and these new approaches are showing exciting results.

Now, however, more professionally-offered and strategically-designed theological education is required. Educational flexibility is still necessary, along with continuing creative approaches, but in our quest for new programmes and methods, we must make our decisions properly. Rather than choice by convenience, we must ask upon what principles we will design or adopt new models and methods of education. This question leads us to examine the basic purposes of our mission. The specific curricula and structures by which we do theological education must be contextually determined, but what we do and how we do it must emerge from our mission.

This study, then, provides an examination of the purposes of education, which, I am arguing, should inform the design and practice of the theological education we offer in the 21st century. With this in mind, then, let us turn to the reasons why we provide education.

The Purposes of Education

Three purposes of education govern all educational strategies. There are variations, of course, but, in general, these purposes summarise the basic approaches available to us. We will consider a symbol for each, discuss implications for theological education, and raise important concerns.

1. The Empty Bottle

The first purpose of education is to pass on or transmit information, in much the same way that we fill an empty bottle. The Coke bottle, as we know it, was designed in 1915, 29 years after the Coca-Cola formula first appeared on the market. The Coke bottle also symbolises our perception of education. It suggests that the student's mind is empty and the teacher fills it up. Paulo Freire calls it 'banking education',² because the teacher deposits information into the 'bank vault' of the student's mind. Many of the world's educational systems follow this practice. We jam students into classrooms in the same way as we pack a crate with empty bottles, and teachers fill up these empty student minds with new information that is to be copied neatly into their notebooks. The success of education, then, depends on how much of that information can be remembered. So a student who scores 90% in an examination is 'better educated' than one who receives 50%. The myth is that education happens solely through information recall.

The Church has adopted this approach. We believe that transmitting correct information provides a foundation for a 'right' Christian worldview and lifestyle. When transmitting information is the only reason for education, however, it raises significant questions. First, no student is an empty bottle. Every student who comes to an educational experience brings particular information and value. There may be additional knowledge or new information to be imparted, but the bottle is never empty! Second, transmitting knowledge is what Freire calls an 'assistencialist' ideology.³ It offers information as a 'hand out', thus putting others in a position of needing help. In so doing, it denies the dignity of the human being. Third, this approach to education hinders the God-created human spirit. Personal interests are not as important as the teacher's 'store' of knowledge that

² P Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. (New York, Herder and Herder, 1970) pp 58-60.

³ P Freire. *Education: the practice of freedom*. (Aylesbury, Bucks, Hazell Watson and Viney Ltd, 1976) (reprint of P Freire, 1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. (New York: Continuum, 1976) p. 113.

needs to be redeposited in new bottles. Fourth, in this process we compare students to each other rather than promoting the unique personhood of each individual. Fifth, what is learned becomes more important than how it is learned. A 'banking system' does not prepare the student to process information or to know how to think. The sixth problem is that recall has little to do with learning. Learning is more about change. Seventh, stressing grades unwittingly suggests that the goal of education is a reward.⁴ Finally, this posture is dependent on the untenable philosophy of a static and unchanging body of 'knowledge' from which we appropriate information. The problem is that what constitutes 'knowledge' varies from culture to culture and discipline to discipline.⁵

A better approach is to understand knowledge as ever-expanding and fluid. It continually grows and changes as it incorporates new information that challenges old information.⁶ Some of the world's knowledge, along with our theology, is accurate but incomplete; it needs to be expanded. Some is inaccurate but held to be truth; it needs adjustment. More to the point, expanding our 'pool' of theological knowledge does not come through transmitted information, but by creative thinking that draws relationships between pieces of information where no relationship had been seen before (witness the rapid development of technology during the last ten years). The expansion of knowledge, then, comes through learning how to learn and how to process information, not through filling up a new bottle with already-known information.

We move from the empty bottle to another picture.

2. The Baton

The second purpose of education is to train a person for a profession, to do a particular job, or take on a role or responsibility. It is symbolised by passing a baton in a race.

When relay races were first devised in 1890, the runners carried and passed on a small flag. This proved to be too awkward, so the runner was then obliged only to touch the next person in the race. The baton was introduced at the 1912 Olympics,⁷ which added interest and excitement to the sport, since passing a baton requires exceptional skill, and races are won or lost simply by how proficiently the baton is transferred between

⁴ J Vella. *Learning to listen, learning to teach: the power of dialogue in educating adults*. (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994) p. 159.

⁵ D M Wolfe and D A Kolb. Career development, personal growth, and experiential learning, in D A Kolb, I M Rubin, & J S Osland *The organizational behavior reader*, 145-174. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1991) p. 159.

⁶ P Freire. *Pedagogy in process*. (New York, Seabury Press, 1978) p. 89.

⁷ Relay race. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Volume 9 (1991) p. 1015.

runners.⁸ Because it is so important, athletes painstakingly practise baton passing as part of their training regime.

In the same way, education prepares new leaders to carry out societal or institutional responsibilities. A school (or individual) trains others to carry on particular work or fill social roles. In that sense, education becomes a community responsibility, since it is for the group and from within the group that leadership training is provided.⁹

Brian Haymes, addressing the European Baptist Theological Teachers' Conference in June 1996, reminded us that our theological institutions are inseparably linked to the calling of the Church,¹⁰ thus implying our responsibility to train leaders for church ministry. This educational purpose enables the work of the Church to continue. And given our Baptist position on the ministry of the laity (Eph. 4:11-12), all church members should be trained for leadership and/or service ministries, including Bible study teachers, kitchen helpers, evangelists, maintenance workers, deacons, and counsellors.¹¹ Unfortunately, we often assume that lay leaders will competently carry out their ministries, so the work of the local church bumbles along from one unprepared leader to another. If our seminaries are to meet the educational needs of the whole church,¹² and if we are serious about the priesthood of all believers, our responsibility, at the very least, should include preparing pastors to train others. Unfortunately, not many of our institutions strategise for this important training ministry.

Clearly, however, our historic and primary responsibility in theological education involves training leaders for professional ministry. This might include pastors, youth leaders, music directors, business managers, and, even, Union administrators. In theological education circles, two extreme positions can be found. One says that theological education should only prepare scholars and theologians. Those who take this approach abandon almost all practical training for the sake of strenuous biblical, theological, and historical studies. The other position argues that theological education must only train for practical church leadership. These schools major in applied theology and offer little academic course work. But both extremes must be rejected if we are to fulfil our calling; the Church needs well-trained and prepared pastors, but it also needs serious scholars and theologians. The question is how we can adequately do both.

⁸ Major team and individual sports *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Volume 28 (1991) p. 171.

⁹ Pazmino, *op cit.*, pp. 125-126.

¹⁰ B Haymes. *A theology of theological education*. Unpublished paper presented at the European Baptist Theological Teachers' Conference, IBTS, 27 June 1996, p. 3.

¹¹ Pazmino, *op cit.*, pp. 35-36.

¹² Haymes, *op cit.*, p. 2.

As with the first purpose of education, there are also problems when training leaders is the only approach we take to theological education. First, passing the baton prepares men and women to fill roles, but not necessarily to be educated. It maintains the status quo but does not always lead to improvement. In theological education, we may be filling existing roles and leadership responsibilities for the Church, but doing little to encourage creative thinking or restructuring. Education solely for pastoral training does not naturally produce prophets who call the Church to accountability. Second, when we focus on training people, we prepare them for more responsible positions, and may imply that the purpose of being human is to hold a good job. In the Church, we may imply that better trained pastors will be better able to lead larger churches and command larger salaries. Third, professional training often equates a more important role with life-fulfilment. But job satisfaction is not based on rate of pay or role identity. The most fulfilling jobs are those which are worthwhile. Meaningful work comes from 'internal motivation'; where a variety of skills is called upon, there is the possibility of positively influencing other people, and feedback on job effectiveness is evident.¹³ Ministry, of course, is most satisfying when it is fulfilled by the Holy Spirit's leading, not when it occupies a particular office or fills a particular role. Finally, preparation for a profession suggests that fulfilment is reached by doing tasks that provide us with satisfying outcomes. But sometimes, especially in ministry, our Lord calls us to difficult circumstances that are emotionally exhausting, physically threatening, or highly demanding and stressful. Yet this kind of ministry is also accompanied by an overwhelming sense of the Lord's call to be in that place at that time, as we see in the life of the Apostle Paul (Rom. 7:14-25, 2 Cor. 10:1-17, 11:16-29).

By training for ministerial competence, then, we prepare men and women for various kinds of ministry. But when this is our only approach to theological education, the leaders we train may only be capable of filling traditional positions and managing already-established responsibilities. How, then, can we expect the Church to be relevant to a new world order if we train leaders for old structures and systems? This brings us to a third reason for education.

3. The Open Door

The third and highest purpose of education is to lead the student to personal growth and freedom. It is symbolised by the following experience related by Arthur Gordon:

¹³ J R Hackman, G Oldham, R Janson and K Purdy. A new strategy for job enrichment, in D A Kolb, I M Rubin and J S Osland. *The organizational behavior reader*, 629-649. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1991) pp. 630-632.

Many summers ago a small boy lived in a tall house by the sea. The house had a tremendous peaked roof made of weathered shingles that towered above all the surrounding cottages. In this roof, near the top, was a trapdoor that could be reached only by a ladder propped up on the attic floor. Children used to play in the attic sometimes, but no one ever climbed up to the trapdoor. It was too high and forbidding. One sunny day, however, when the boy's father was storing some boxes in the attic, he glanced up at the underside of the great roof. 'Must be quite a view from up there', he said to his son. 'Why don't we take a look?'

The boy felt his heart lurch with excitement and a touch of fear, but his father was already testing the shaky ladder. 'Up you go,' he said. 'I'll be right behind you.' Up they went through the mysterious darkness, each step a terror and a delight. Up through the tiny sunbeams lancing through the cracks, up until the boy could smell the ancient heat-soaked shingles, up until the trapdoor, sealed with cobwebs, touched the top of his head. His father unhooked a latch, slid the trapdoor back . . . and a whole new universe burst upon his dazzled eyes.

There lay the sea—but what a sea! Gigantic, limitless, blazing with splintered sunlight, it curved away to infinity, dwarfing the land, rivaling the sky. Below him, queerly inverted, were the tops of trees and—even more unimaginable—the backs of gulls in flight. The familiar path through the dunes was a mere thread where heat waves shimmered; far away a shrunken river with toy boats coiled into the sea. All this he saw at a glance from the protective circle of his father's arm, and the impact of such newness, of such violently expanded horizons, was so great that from that moment the world of his childhood was somehow altered. It was stretched; it was different; it was never quite the same again. . .

Decades have passed since then, . . .but I remember that moment on the roof as if it had happened yesterday.¹⁴

It is this kind of discovery that lies at the heart of the most fulfilling purpose of education, symbolised by an open door. It exposes our students to wider horizons, helps them identify a broader range of options and possibilities, and stretches their imagination. This kind of teaching leads students out of their own shadows, and focuses on learning rather than dispensing information. It liberates, fulfils, and/or perfects the individual.

Given this approach to education, the student is empowered to transform his or her own life. Yes, new information is provided, but that information compels the student to grow rather than just have more data to remember (as with 'banking' education). An increase in knowledge is beneficial, but only as it helps the student meet his or her goals in life. This kind of 'freedom education' also brings about humanisation.¹⁵ Students are brought to social, emotional, and spiritual maturity. It encourages a life-long search for truth, provides more satisfactory answers to life's riddles than the former worldview, and empowers the individual to take

¹⁴ A Gordon. *A touch of wonder*. (Carmel, NY, Guideposts, 1974) pp. 195-196.

¹⁵ Friere, (1970), *op. cit.*, pp. 2-8, 40-41.

responsibility for his or her own education.¹⁶ Instead of 'assistencialism', this approach helps people to address their own problems,¹⁷ so that they can achieve the kind of fully human life that God intends.

For the Christian faith, of course, this purpose of theological education helps the disciple grow towards personal uniqueness (Eph. 1:11-12). Jesus' command to 'be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect' (Matt. 5:48) is a call to completeness, liberation, and wholeness (2 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 5:1). In Philippians 3:12, Paul writes that Christ Jesus has grasped the 'perfect' believer,¹⁸ an indication that Jesus knows the 'completed' individual from the very beginning. It implies that the more closely we follow Jesus, the more fully we become that ideal, perfect, and unique individual that Jesus has in mind. Indeed, self-discovery is one of the reasons for which the Holy Spirit has been given (John 14:26). Shepard identifies this as the pursuit of 'genius', as personal autonomy emerges within the growing disciple.¹⁹

This, of course, coincides with the past, present, and future aspects of biblical salvation. We have been saved from death to new life in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-9), thus celebrating his saving grace in the past. And we are yet to be saved in the fulness of heaven, indicating the future of salvation (Rom. 13:11). But we are also in the process of being saved (1 Cor. 1:18, 1 Pet. 1:9). This present tense of salvation identifies the gradual liberation and perfecting of the Spirit-guided Christian. This 'pilgrimage' approach to salvation, then, asserts that all disciples, no matter how well educated, have personal issues, concerns, and relationships where liberation must still take place.²⁰

Finally, this purpose leads disciples out of themselves and out of the comfort of their local church communities to change the world order. We are created in the 'image of God' (Gen. 1:27), implying not only uniqueness from the rest of creation, but personal autonomy, a responsibility for creative thinking, and a partnering responsibility with God over the rest of creation.²¹ In this way, a call out of our own shadow is a call to serve the social and natural order.²² As we grow in Christ-likeness, we more effectively bring the kingdom of God to earth.²³

¹⁶ Friere (1976), *op cit.*, pp. 56, 122.

¹⁷ Friere (1976), *ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁸ H A Shepard. On the realization of human potential: a path with a heart, in D A Kolb, I M Rubin and J S Osland. *The organizational behavior reader*, 175-186. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1991) p. 179.

¹⁹ Shepard, *ibid.*, p. 180.

²⁰ Shepard, *ibid.*, p. 11.

²¹ Friere (1976), *op cit.*, p. 43.

²² Friere (1970), *op cit.*, p. 114.

²³ T H Groome. *Christian religious education: sharing our story and vision*. (San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1980) pp. 34f.

This call to intentional disciple-making, then, lies at the heart of theological education, as we take on the responsibility to perfect and transform the individual (as the ultimate goal of spiritual formation). This goal of theological education teaches students to think for themselves and to know how to process new information. This must be true for every student, no matter what his or her calling or ultimate vocation. We are engaged in a partnering process whereby the ‘unfinished’ Christian grows into personal, but community-related, freedom.²⁴ K. D. Tu Lum writes of the fundamental objective of Christian religious education as transformation.²⁵ Spiritual formation, says Greenleaf, should empower students to become ‘healthier, wiser, freer, (and) more autonomous’ servants of the Church.²⁶ And Haymes writes that ‘our seminaries must be places of open minded intellectual vigour, of academic integrity, committed to the search for truth and understanding.’²⁷ This happens when we recognise the dignity of human life, stimulate the ‘awakening of (the) consciousness’ of the student,²⁸ and encourage the disciple to search for truth. So we help our students learn how to reflect theologically on life’s issues, take responsibility for their own education (Rom. 2:21, 1 Cor. 9:24-27, 1 Tim. 4:7, and Heb. 5:14), and bring about changes in their world (Matt. 5:123-16, Phil. 2:14-16). Our task is to prepare Christians, no matter at what ‘level’ of education or theological education, to know how to keep growing in their understanding and appreciation of biblically-grounded faith, Christian theology, and competence for ministry. We help current and future church leaders know how to adequately assess issues and needs in ministry and where to find resources, and how to focus their attention on transforming the social order into the kingdom of God through disciple-making. Of course, we must also recognise problems when this third purpose is the only approach we take to education.

First, because this educational strategy is learning-centred, it puts responsibility for education on the student. And when students are free to discover information for themselves, the institution loses control of the content and flow of that information. Rather, one of our responsibilities in theological education is guided study. Our ministry is to lead students to the right kind of thinking and the right way to process information. Stretching the student's mind and horizons necessitates directed study that comes from outside the student. It implies the investment of strategic information that can only come from those who have broader horizons and

²⁴ see Collins, *op cit.*, p. 49.

²⁵ K D Tu Lum. *An examination of theories of learning from a contextual Christian educational perspective*. Unpublished thesis. Baptist Theological Seminary, Rüschlikon, Switzerland, 1990, p. 16.

²⁶ R K Greenleaf. *Servant leadership*. (NY, Paulist Press, 1977) p. 13.

²⁷ Haymes, *op. cit.* p. 4.

²⁸ Friere (1976), *op cit.*, p. 43.

a deeper grasp of academic disciplines than the student. Further, when spiritual formation is primary, our educational efforts can too narrowly focus on the needs and desires of the student's personal agenda rather than critical information that is necessary for the student's growth. When students are imaginatively 'free' in their pursuit of knowledge, they are also free to restrict thinking to their own comfort level, needs, or desires. Student-centred education may be more an encouragement toward student satisfaction than of real growth. Finally, of course, unless a society's entire educational system is designed to encourage students, from earliest years, to study for themselves, they may not be prepared for personal growth when they reach higher levels of education.

Toward Spiritual Formation

This, then, completes our brief overview of the purposes of education. My appeal is that our institutions should impart biblical and theological knowledge (*information enrichment*), prepare Christian men and women for various ministries (*ministerial competence*), and lead disciples out of their own shadows and toward freedom and perfection (*spiritual formation*). There are dangers when any one of these purposes is out of balance with the others, but it is clear that all three purposes can and should be met in our programmes of theological education.

The following chart summarises these three purposes to which we are called:

Symbol	Educational purpose	Christian orientation	Texts	Methodology
Coke Bottle	to transmit information	<i>Information enrichment:</i> to teach doctrine, biblical information, scholarship, and a Christian lifestyle	Deut. 6:1-9 Deut. 11:8-9 Prov. 22:6 2 Tim. 1:13-14 2 Tim. 3:14-17	Lecture and reading
Baton	to train for a job	<i>Ministerial competence:</i> to train for local church leadership or provide formal theological education	Luke 6:40 Eph. 4:11-13 1 Tim. 2:6 2 Tim. 2:2 Titus 2:4	Lecture, reading, discussion, mentoring, and 'practicum' experiences
Open Door	to aid in the freedom of the individual	<i>Spiritual formation:</i> to lead to personal discipleship, growth and self-training	John 14:26 Rom. 2:21 1 Cor. 9:24-27 1 Tim. 4:7 Heb. 5:14	Ask the right questions, provide 'stretching' information, teach problem solving, and motivate students to learn on their own

When all three purposes are met, our institutions will have their greatest impact, but it is through the third purpose, spiritual formation, that theological education will find its coherence.

To encourage our continued reflection, then, I offer the following comments and recommendations related to spiritual formation:

Information Enrichment and Ministerial Competence Issues

When information and training are responsible elements of theological education, they will ultimately work toward the spiritual formation of the student. How, then, can we integrate spiritual formation with information enrichment and training for ministerial competence? Here are some observations:

1. ***Spiritual formation must be offered with information enrichment:*** Unfortunately, the history of theological education is tainted with attempts to divorce intellectual development from spiritual life, thereby negating theological education that is relevant to the ministry and mission of the Church. We must find ways to integrate all three purposes in our institutional structures, curriculum design, and teaching strategies.
2. ***Information must be strategically sequenced:*** To provide intentional spiritual formation, curricula should be developed strategically, so that information is sequenced from simple to complex in the student's experience within the institutional programme. And most individual courses should follow the same principle: simple to complex and group experience to personal engagement.²⁹ This is particularly important if we expect our students to grasp and comprehend ideas that are new to them, and help them advance from step to step in the maturation process.
3. ***Ministerial competence needs strategic planning:*** Sometimes, theological institutions don't plan to pass the baton; they just hope it happens. They pass on 'correct' information, but then pray that their students will automatically learn pastoral skills. But if baton passing is the most critical phase of the relay race, we must be intentional about this important responsibility. Preparing students for ministry must include on-the-job experiences where they are fully engaged in legitimate opportunities for ministry, such as working with volunteers, management, responsible and effective preaching and teaching, and providing visionary leadership.
4. ***Ministerial competence is not academic competence:*** We must be intentional about evaluating competence for ministry quite apart from academic competence. Those who are not adequately gifted for local

²⁹ Vella, *op cit.*, pp. 9-11.

church ministry should be helped to discover other ministries for which they are better suited.

5. ***Ministerial competence comes best by mentoring.*** Competence in practical ministry will not happen in the classroom, nor can it be taught by scholars who have had little or no local church experience. It is most effectively carried out through the process of mentoring. However, mentors must be trained. Just because a person has been engaged in effective ministry for many years does not guarantee that he or she will be an adequate mentor. Those who have had experience must also learn theory that accompanies the practice of ministry, and they must be taught how to pass on their wealth of knowledge and experience.
6. ***We require adequately-prepared lay leadership:*** If our institutions of theological education are to be servants of the whole Church, we must incorporate the training of lay leaders. But how can we do that when our resources are already so limited? Alternatively, how can we better prepare our pastoral students to train lay leaders. It is time that we provide practical evidences of our belief in the priesthood of all believers and the ministry of the laity.
7. ***Different student goals require different programmes:*** In a day of increasing specialisation, it is not necessary that all students be trained in the same way, for the same purpose, or with the same curriculum. The Church needs educated pastors who can effectively lead local congregations. But it also needs scholars and theologians who will act as the 'conscience of the Church' and who help the Church deal intellectually with its faith. Not all pastors need (or want) to be biblical scholars or systematic theologians. And not all scholars are gifted for local church leadership. Can we, then, devise different programmes for different roles in Church ministry, where differently-gifted students are trained differently for different ministries? And how can we train scholars to help advance the ministry of the local church rather than just the academy?
8. ***Our scholars need adequate preparation and training:*** Scholars have a special role and should be trained in at least five areas of competence. That is, they must:
 - a. learn how to rightly manage scholarship, to know the best and most recent literature in their area of academic expertise;
 - b. know how to read and evaluate original documents in their discipline;
 - c. be taught how to think for themselves, process information, and draw new relationships between ideas not previously seen;

- d. learn how to communicate scholarly information through teaching, lecturing, and writing, especially if we expect them to be a resource to the Church and the academic community; and
- e. be trained to serve the Church with their scholarship and not just academia.

Relational Issues

Theological education, in my mind, extends from the development of community. If we are to prepare our students for their own emerging discipleship, there are three relational elements that are important:

1. ***Theological education is an extension of church ministry:*** Providing formal theological education is a specialised calling, but it is also an extension of the same ministry to which our local churches are called. The Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20) defines our ultimate purpose: to make disciples. All Christian institutions, from the local church to the most advanced formal theological school, should be engaged in some phase of disciple-making. Thus, as an extension of the local church's responsibility to make disciples, our institutions of theological education must find a new and more dynamic partnering relationship with our local churches. Local churches must be the focus for effectively training a new generation of pastoral leadership, and we need to help them know how to do this.
2. ***Community life is essential to spiritual formation:*** If we are to be faithful servants of the Church, we must be intentional about providing theological education in a Christian context, and in a way that leads to a more relevant and secure evangelical faith. *Koinonia* is important, especially when our students are confronted with disruptive biblical or theological information that challenges their Christian worldview.³⁰ By providing an encouraging and supportive community, students will feel more comfortable in raising questions and offering observations without inhibition or fear, and, in this way, will better learn how to process new or uncomfortable information when they leave our institutions.
3. ***A new global community requires sharing resources:*** We also live in a new global community that requires mutual support and encouragement. Our institutions that are blessed with financial security, a full-time teaching staff, and good libraries, for the most part, have gained their soundness through inheritance rather than personal efforts. None of us really 'owns' our resources, and it is time for the 'haves' to serve alongside the 'have nots'. At the very least, we must perceive and use

³⁰ Vella, *ibid*, pp. 6-8.

our God-given resources for education that extends beyond our own regions and Unions. We all have something to learn from each other, and our institutions in Europe and the Middle East must work diligently to network together and share resources for the greater good of all. This includes making teaching staff and published materials accessible to those who are just now establishing schools or who find themselves in less advantaged circumstances.

Teaching Issues

Finally, teachers provide the most direct impact on student learning, so helping the student toward freedom and perfection depends as much on the teacher as on institutional structures and programme design. So, how can our teachers teach for student fulfilment?

1. ***Attitude counts:*** The liberation of the student begins with the teacher's attitude. The curriculum, no matter what the subject matter, can be oriented toward the perfection of the student, but that must be foremost on the teacher's agenda if it is to happen.
2. ***Listen:*** Spiritual formation, to a great extent, depends on the needs of the student, so that the teacher must observe, listen,³¹ and engage the student in ongoing dialogue.³² Through personal conferences, class discussions, small group work, and informal discussions, teachers are better able to help students discover their own agenda and areas of personal liberation.³³
3. ***Why?*** Information enrichment is important, but teachers need to continually reflect on why they are sharing particular knowledge. It may be information that prepares students for a more advanced level of learning and personal growth. It may help them solve problems, prepare them to study more effectively on their own, or see the biblical text or local church ministry in a different way. More than just passing on information, then, we are contributing to personal freedom.
4. ***Learning through experience:*** With effort and forethought, the cyclical nature of adult learning should be taken into account,³⁴ as we emphasise learning over teaching. Curriculum design should allow for conflicting experiences, personal reflection, the derivation of learning principles, and the testing of those principles in new situations.
5. ***Tools and resources:*** Information should be shared in such a way that knowledge continues to grow after the course is finished. If our students

³¹ Vella, *ibid*, pp. 4-6.

³² Freire (1978), *op cit.*, p. 106.

³³ Friere (1970), *op cit.*, p. 99.

³⁴ Wolfe and Kolb, *op cit.*

continue to learn when they leave the environment of the academic programme, the teacher must offer tools and resources for further growth and personal study.³⁵

6. ***Strategic information input:*** There is an obvious tension between forced information enrichment and the student's freedom. One way to manage this contradiction in our educational programmes is to minimise the amount of information the teacher shares and emphasise that which encourages personal student reflection and growth. This is difficult for most of us, because we enjoy sharing our own important insights and opinions on the subject matter at hand.
7. ***Maximise learning:*** Because our direct formative influence on students is limited, teachers should learn how to maximise learning in a short period of time. This may require asserting unusual boldness in confronting the student's conceptual categories, theological postures, or inaccurate information. Students must sometimes be challenged to think through their basic theological assumptions and information.³⁶ Often, questions, issues, and biblical or academic knowledge will disrupt previously-held beliefs and reveal contradictions in the student's theological position or worldview, and the 'safety' of the teacher's supportive but assertive love for the student will stretch and develop the student's ability to accept, reject, or modify new information.
8. ***Continual professional development:*** Finally, teachers need ongoing training, stimulation, and growth in their own academic disciplines and spiritual formation. We should expect the highest academic and spiritual standards of those who teach, and, if this is to happen, continual professional development is essential. As institutions, we must provide for (even require) opportunities, time, finances, and resources for our teachers to continue their own education as long as they are teaching.

Conclusion

As the educational arm of the Church, our institutions of theological education serve individuals, local churches, and Unions in the name of Jesus Christ. We do so by expanding the 'pool' of knowledge available to the Church (*information enrichment*), preparing new leaders as adequately as possible (*ministerial competence*), and strengthening, encouraging, and liberating disciples to be more effective leaders of our local churches (*spiritual formation*).

³⁵ Friere (1976), *op cit.*, p. 48.

³⁶ Friere (1970), *op. cit.*, p. 100.

Of course, we are all restricted by the amount of time we have to educate our students and by the limited financial, personnel, and printed resources we have available to us. Hopefully, we can help each other overcome these obstacles, but in whatever creative ways we manage our programmes, it is our business to enable men and women to appropriate and share their own contributions to advance the kingdom of Jesus Christ into the world.

Ultimately, the intent and effectiveness by which we carry out our ministry is a question that each of us must face. But as we join hands and work collectively to carry out these purposes through theological education, our Baptist witness in Europe, the Middle East, and throughout the world will gain academic and theological integrity, and will keep growing and changing to meet the needs of the world in which and to which we have been called.

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DEVELOPING MISSIONARY CONGREGATIONS

Dreaming of a missionary church

What kind of church are we dreaming of nowadays? What would our picture of the church of our hopes be? Sharing with young people about the church of the future I have often invited them to draw the church they had in mind¹. Presenting these drawings here is impossible, but so often they represented legitimate dreams of a missionary church. I have been touched by the faith that young people have in the indestructible character of the church. Today's believing young people are looking for the church of the 21st century in which poor human effort and the work of the Spirit come together. Of course speculation and selling cheap dreams make no sense at all, but it is worthwhile to reflect on the dreams we have. This reflection forces us to use our imagination in a good and responsible way. I dream of a specific church.

My own dream is about a dynamic church, one that is so open and accessible to outsiders that when they share in the life of the church (not only on a Sunday and in a building) they can experience God's presence, most especially because of the longing for encountering the living Lord which is reflected so obviously by the members of the church. When outsiders come they can feel at home; they find a place where they get to know Christ. The church uses all the means she has at her disposal to communicate the gospel in an understandable way. She is willing to build bridges between the dominant culture and her own understanding of the Gospel. In her outreach, the church is committed not only to a message that meets the spiritual needs of individuals but is also focused on balanced social, and where possible, political involvement. The community of believers is an environment of authentic biblical acceptance. There should be no premature judgments about others, because there should be courage to listen to each other.

I also dream about a church in which there are no feelings of superiority or inferiority. The leadership of the church does not operate from a position of superiority. Instead it believes itself to be called by God to fulfil a function, with the leaders convinced that they are servants of the church. They are therefore not dominant, but are able to mobilise and enable the church members to do the work of ministry, instead of doing and

¹ These drawings were presented during several youth group weekends in a Baptist Church in the north of the Netherlands and were part of an assignment to work with the theme: 'The Baptist church of 2005'.

controlling all the work themselves. They really live from Ephesians 4:12. The body of Christ is built up as all God's people serve. I am dreaming of a community of believers in which every member wholeheartedly praises God, using as many different forms of praise as possible. It is a community where worship and prayer have an important place. The biblical teaching and education of the church are focused on relevant themes. There is a nurturing climate in which all ages, the young and the old, can grow in Christ.

Probably it would not be difficult to go on like this for a while, defining and spelling out all the other important areas and details of my ideal church. The reality, as we know, is not always like this. The church is living in between the 'already' and the 'not yet'. There is that tension between the theological ideal and the empirical picture. But at the same time, I believe this dream is not something that is just in our imagination, just falling out of the air. We relate it to our understanding of the scriptures; actually, it is based on an interpretation of scripture. How, then, do we take this dream and make it operate? We are looking for a vision of the church as an instrument of God with which we can work in every day reality. At the beginning of this article it is necessary to summarise this vision.

We can summarise the vision as one in which we see the church as the instrument of God's passion to redeem the world. This is the framework as we seek to shape a specific perspective on the development of a missionary congregation. I would argue that this kind of congregation is one in which a higher awareness of the missionary nature of the church can be perceived, but is also a congregation which is aware of the fact that in order to enable her to live this missionary presence, a new model of the church is needed. Writing the vision will be our first concern. Secondly, we will look at the more practical consequences of this desired development in terms of church development as a process. This is necessary because changes do not come automatically. The assumption is: developing this missionary congregation needs a clear process in which the vision that has been 'written' can be implemented.

Write the vision – towards a new model of the church

How can we develop this vision of the church for the 21st century? The easy answer could be: it does not need to be developed; it is present in scripture. The only thing we have to do is to apply the principles of scripture in the practice and life of the church. However, I do believe a refocusing is necessary. There are many reasons for this. Basically we could argue the case that churches struggle with their identity in the context of the postmodern culture.

On the one hand, in many Western countries we see a decrease in understanding of the meaning of church tradition and the practice of faith. On the other hand, religious life in Europe and elsewhere has not disappeared completely, and indeed in some countries in Eastern Europe and in the two-thirds world there is significant growth. But in whatever context we find ourselves there is a challenge to reconsider the shape of the church as it has been traditionally understood.²

The traditional shape of the institutionalised church, whether inherited in the case of Protestant churches from the Reformation, or in other traditions from earlier centuries, cannot continue to be seen as the only context in which faith can grow. The wider religious socialisation which often gave identity to the church – that is, the church was recognised as having a place in society – has often been seen as offering the main possibility for communication of faith. The old traditional shape is no longer an adequate channel for mission and evangelism in the current cultural climate in Europe. Many ask themselves whether the church is not standing in the way of her own message. For those in the radical church tradition this should not be a threatening question.

The imaginative picture of the church I have drawn in terms of a dream does not mean that we automatically take into account the wider social context. We have to look in more detail at how a vision may direct and empower the church in today's society. Generally speaking, there is a lack of vision for engagement with the culture. There is too often an inadequate connection between the powerful message of scripture and the practice of the faith by the members of the church.

A refocusing on the biblical resources in the light of the cultural context is a first step in the development of a missionary congregation, either in Eastern or Western Europe. The biblical imagery concerning the church in mission is a very important source. Many biblical images relate to the church in mission³, e.g. there are pilgrimage images, such as the way, sojourners, the poor; there are new-order images, such as the Kingdom of God, new creation, new humanity; there are peoplehood images, such as people of God, family of God, the shepherd and the flock; and there are the images of transformation like salt, light, city, spiritual house, and witnessing community. These illumine our understanding of the identity and mission of the church. Images can communicate a vision and serve as a source to help us develop a missionary community. They draw our attention to and make us conscious of the identity of the church. However,

² R Erwich. *It's people we are dealing with*. An explorative inquiry into the function of church development processes in three local Baptist congregations. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1999).

³ J Driver. *Images of the Church in Mission*. (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1997).

the reality is that this consciousness can easily be obscured. In each new context it has to be put on the agenda of the practice of the church again and also clarified for the new situation. This consciousness consists, according to W. R. Shenk,⁴ of two parts, an inward mission consciousness and an outward mission consciousness. These two parts have both to be strengthened.

The strengthening of the inward mission consciousness, according to Shenk, is a process directed at a new understanding and application of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 (and its outworking) as it is addressed primarily to the community of disciples and not primarily to individuals. The church has to move away from self-maintenance as its way of thinking to a concern for missionary involvement. Though the maintenance outlook is not true for all churches, I would like to comment that it is a common problem that needs to be addressed. If the church wants to be a missionary church, and if she wants to be a worthy instrument of God's passion to redeem the world, then she needs to have the fire of the passion of God evident within her own life.⁵ Only when the church lives in a deep, 'covenantal' relationship with God, the kind that is at the heart of the Baptist understanding of church, will she know this flame or perhaps rekindle the fire⁶. In this context Shenk holds the view that the Great Commission, which was foundational for the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, needs to be re-exegeted. It points to nothing else than missionary faithfulness. He is convinced that reading the text in its biblical context will stimulate and radicalise the church's vision of itself in relation to the world. It is a foundational ecclesiological statement⁷.

Let us look at this more closely. When we seek to disciple (make disciples of) men and women, which is at the heart of the Great Commission, we enable them to embrace the fullness of God's reign in their lives. This understanding is different, however, from the one that has been influential for at least two centuries in the Protestant missionary movement. It is not just about motivating individual Christians to go out into the world to fulfil the task of evangelism. This text structures the relationship between world and church. We live a missionary existence. This is the inward mission consciousness. Mission is about the extension of the reign of God. This involves – according to Shenk – a twofold model of

⁴ W R Shenk. *Write the Vision: The Church Renewed*. (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1995).

⁵ *Write the Vision*, p.87.

⁶ Exactly this 'rekindling of the fire' in relationship to evangelism was at the heart of the emergence of the interest for church development in the Dutch Union in the late 1980s. The fact that evangelism as part of the identity of a local Baptist church was no longer a dominant feature led to the acceptance of a 4-year church development programme. The relationship between healthy, spiritual and passionate churches and the passion for evangelism was emphasised.

⁷ *Write the Vision*, p.89.

mission. He sees this in Acts 11:19-26 and 13:1-3. The organic mode is reflected in the first text. The church grew organically; witness to God's reign was at the heart of the community.⁸ The early disciples challenged the existing cultural plausibility structures (acting in a counter-cultural way⁹) because they believed God reigned. They went on witnessing, in whatever circumstances. The sending mode is reflected in Acts 13:1-3. Certain individuals were set apart by the Holy Spirit for a different type of work: itinerant preaching across the geographical boundaries into other regions. Shenk comments that particularly this saved the church from 'parochialism'; in other words being the church meant breaking out of a self-centered existence. We can agree with Shenk that this is really at the heart of strengthening the inward mission consciousness of church. This strengthening leads to a deeper understanding of the tasks of the church of the 21st century.

In fact Shenk's concept is rooted in the centrality of God's reign or Kingdom. This is quite clear if we look at the second part of the mission consciousness: the outward mission consciousness. If the controlling principle in the inward consciousness is the Kingdom of God, then outwardly we must become critically aware of the kingdom of the world, as it is counterposed to the reign of God.¹⁰ Wherever we work on the extension of the Kingdom of God, there will be tension with the reigning forces and powers of this world. Again, this has counter-cultural aspects. If we want to train people to have a more missionary mind and outlook, this involves a self-conscious standing against the mainstream of the thoughts and attitudes in daily life and in society in much of contemporary Europe. At least at three levels Shenk sees this Christian 'opposition' against the mainstream which should become clear: in a critical evaluation from a Christian perspective of the function of the modern autonomous self, of the importance of technique or technology, and of the role of power and violence. When I speak about the mainstream I am referring especially to Western culture, but it is a culture that has been spreading rapidly in the past ten years.

Firstly, of course, we cannot say only negative things about the development of the autonomous individual (e.g. think about the development of human rights), but the main critique is directed against the

⁸ When David Bosch wrote about a new missiological conceptualisation in his book *Believing in the Future* (see next note), he concluded with 6 elements that form the basis for a new missiology: it must have an ecological dimension, it is counter-cultural, ecumenical, contextual and will be deeply rooted in a local worshipping community. He believed that only if our witness is rooted in a worshipping community will it be fruitful to the mission of God.

⁹ D Bosch. *Believing in the Future. Toward a Missiology of Western Culture*. (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1995).

¹⁰ *Write the Vision*, p.94.

self-worship culture, of which we could say that this has become almost a cult. Shenk rightly poses the question whether we have a valid perception of personhood¹¹. He argues that this has had huge consequences even for the concept of conversion: belief has been separated from following ethical standards (the actual new life).

In the second place, the role of technique points to the way in which modern scientific technology has become part of our daily life and is woven into our basic structures of life. Who could imagine life without e-mail? Who could think of a life without biological, medical and genetic interventions? In many situations, however, we are faced with loneliness, emptiness and alienation. Thus, the question is whether the church is uncritically shaping her ministries on the basis of technology? I believe Shenk is overvaluing this particular argument, though in many cases he may be right. I believe modern technology can function as an important supportive instrument, though not a means in itself, to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ. The main criterion should be whether technology dehumanises communication and takes away the personal mode of listening and being involved in people's lives – communication from heart to heart. Biblically speaking, we have been (re)created in the image of God which means that we have been entrusted with the balanced and careful concern for this world in all its aspects.

Finally, power and violence play important roles in our world. Looking at the well-known children's programme, 'Cartoon Network'¹², we realise how pervasive the role and influence of violence is. This is a direct reflection of a violent culture in which power and the execution of power in whatever way that manifests itself are dominant features. This infiltrates churches too: the way the leadership in church life functions shows in many situations more of the characteristics of a secular pattern of leadership rather than demonstrating the biblical servant-leadership so clearly expressed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. The basic structure for leadership is reflected in the story about Jesus washing his disciples' feet (John 13:1-17).

If we are really longing for a church as the worthy instrument of God's passion to redeem the world, the development of this inward and outward mission consciousness should be taken seriously. In the end this does not place the church at the centre of attention, theologically or practically, but rather emphasises the dynamic way in which we live as a missionary people of a missionary God. We need a new model of the church in which this is all spelled out in a balanced way and one which

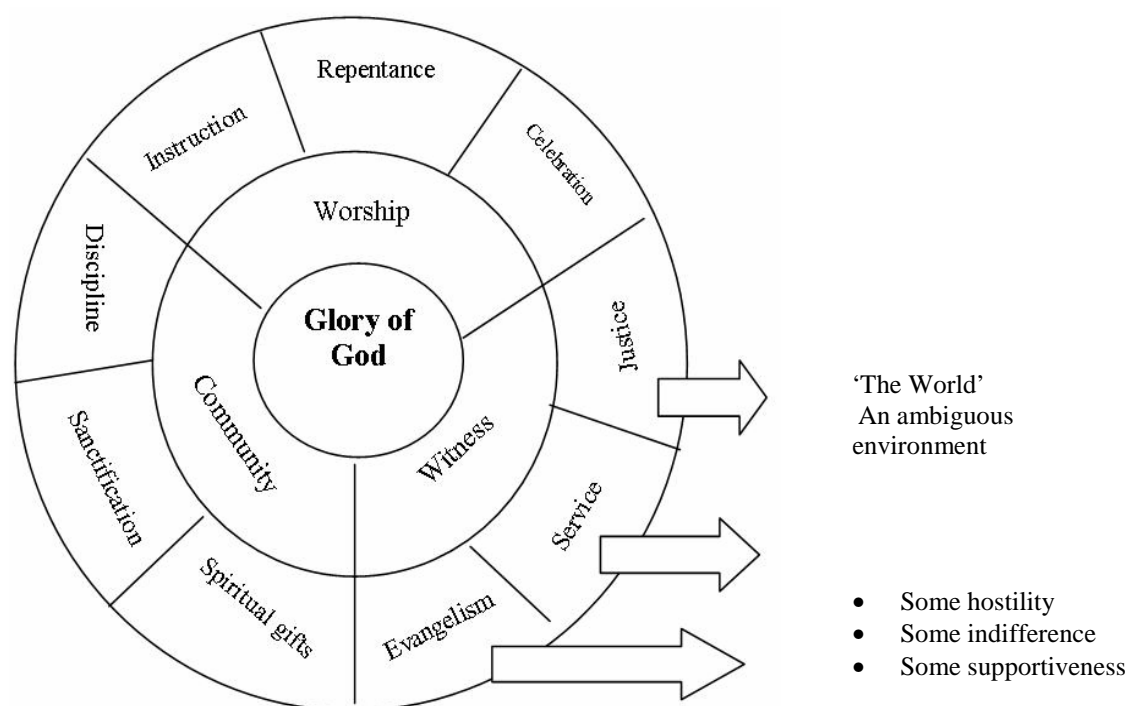
¹¹ *Write the Vision*, p.96.

¹² Not to mention the impact of the well-known Walt Disney-movies in terms of imposed worldviews etc.

serves as a theological foundation for the work of the church. The inward and outward missionary consciousness Shenk presents, is adequately reflected in the dynamic model Howard Snyder¹³ has developed.

Church in Mission

The rediscovered mission frontier



Howard Snyder presents the church not primarily as an institution but as an organism. In his model the church has three essential functions: worship, community and witness. Central to his model is the purpose of the church: to glorify God. Snyder connects three further aspects to each essential function: worship – instruction, repentance and celebration; community – discipline, sanctification and spiritual gifts; witness – evangelism, service and justice. Worship and community empower the church's witness. The church's witness is nourished by the quality of community life and worship. The balancing of these aspects in the total functioning of the church seems very important to me. In the renewal of churches the focus should not be entirely on internal renewal, but from the beginning of a process there should be a development of the outward consciousness. There is a new mission frontier. Through the witness in evangelism, justice and service the church can influence the dominant cultures. The church stands no longer in an isolated position. She lives in a

¹³ H Snyder, *Radical Renewal: The Problem of Wineskins Today*. (Houston: Touch Publications, 1996).

creative tension: separate from the world and sent into the world (compare John 17:14,16). It points to a fresh understanding of 'in' the world though not 'of' the world. The big issue for our times is, as van Gelder¹⁴ said, that we are facing a huge challenge: to develop a 'kingdom-oriented ecclesiology'. In the development of her collective identity the church needs to look first to God and his Kingdom and secondly to the current situation and condition of the world.

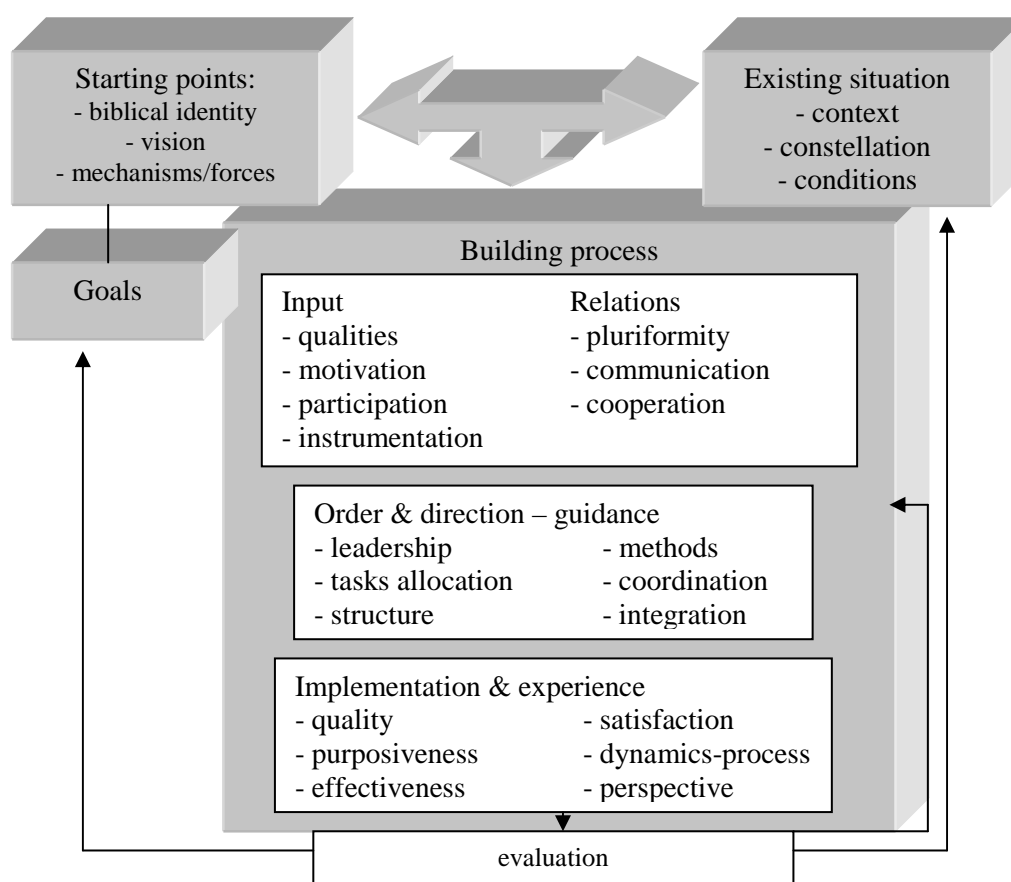
Do the vision

Writing the vision and developing a new model do not automatically realise the desired new situation or a new refocused dynamic practice. Shenk's proposals are relevant but may not achieve more than theoretically localising change in a renewed understanding and interpretation of the missionary essence of the church. This is of course very necessary and adequate but affirmation alone does not change the situation. What he calls the development of an inward mission consciousness is focused primarily on identity-related issues. The outward mission consciousness, though closely related to the inward, is already telling us more about attitude and action.

Snyder's model, for its part, needs to be operationalised in a given specific context. Rediscovering the mission frontier does not automatically lead to a dynamically functioning church. The essential elements in the model – worship, community and witness – need to be seen as defining the object of renewal in the local church. I would like to argue the case that this can only be done in a process, not just in one single action or in a short-term series of actions. By one single presentation the church members will not 'own' and integrate the vision. Without losing precious and valuable time there is a possibility of constructing a process of renewal.

The aim of this process is to strengthen and stimulate the three previously mentioned areas, of worship, community and witness, and their related aspects or functions. It means that during the building process these areas need to be evaluated in terms of their present qualities. The model I suggest to use in this process can be employed in a threefold way. We can use it for a description of the current situation: what do we actually see? Or we can use it to make an analysis of the total functioning of the church. Finally we can use it to change the work of the local church. All the factors in the model play their own role in a process of renewal and we have to be aware of the effect they have on the whole.

¹⁴ Van Gelder, *Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).



This model is an imperfect picture (which has to be filled in by us) of the factors that play a role in the process that starts with the conviction that the church is a reality of the Spirit of God. In the process we need to deal with the perceived identity of the church, as we have seen in the model constructed by Snyder. We need to develop a vision that matches the local situation. This model can help us as a church or even as a Union to focus on the foundation on which we stand. The use of biblical imagery, incorporated in biblical texts, can help us to reinterpret the function and position of the churches. Of course there are several forces at work in the church. There is the power of God's Word through the Spirit and the power of prayer. The lives of the church members have to be marked by faith, hope and love. At the same time there are anti-forces (cultural, personal). The enemy is often inside, not only outside, and many forces try to damage the work of God. People can resist in a very difficult way and this can paralyse.

Important in this process is an honest analysis of the existing situation. Too often we leave out a thorough analysis. What is the quality of the actual situation? What can we find out about the cultural context in which we are living? What do people actually think and believe? What are

the 'historical blocks' that prevent the church's growth? The building process also demands a clear view of the qualities of people involved. God has given many gifts, which can be used for his work in this world. We cannot define all the factors in this model in this short article, though they are very interesting. This model can help us develop an action plan, which can be implemented in stages. The model relates directly to a series of phases through which a balanced process should go: orientation, awareness of the problematic situation, diagnosis, communication with the members of the church, the setting of goals, defining the instruments and means, the actual implementation of changes via programmes and finally the evaluation.

Conclusion

In dealing with developing missionary congregations in East and West, I started with a dream. I think my dream can be shaped more realistically by the use of the models I presented. Whether in the Western or Eastern European context, the issue at stake is the same. We seek a vision of the church as the worthy instrument of God's passion to redeem the world. We are determined to put this vision into practice. Whatever model we use, it has to be carefully applied to the context in which we live. I can imagine that the model Howard Snyder has developed, and even the first model from W. R. Shenk, look somehow too systematic. This could be a problem, because very often we are not used to working in a more systematic way in churches. However, I am convinced that both models can help us in our different contexts and are applicable to the way we can develop our churches as worthy instruments in God's hands. For the glory of God, for the Kingdom of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit - write the vision and do the vision.

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UNION OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS- BAPTISTS OF ESTONIA 1945-1989: SURVIVAL TECHNIQUES, OUTREACH EFFORTS, SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Introduction

The aim of this article is to give a general survey of Baptist history in Estonia, the northernmost of the three Baltic countries, from 1945 to 1989. This rather broad theme is observed from three aspects. Firstly, what features characterised the relationship between the State and Baptist churches in these years of atheistic suppression? Secondly, how did Baptists, in a situation of extremely restricted public mission opportunities, continue to reach out with their Christian message? And thirdly, what attitudes and theological emphases developed during these decades under a communist regime, specifically in a situation where several Free Church traditions were forced to merge together? In short an attempt is made to describe briefly the course of development of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia (UECBE) in this period.

It is quite clear that these three aspects are very closely connected. Historical events can be analysed from all the three aspects at the same time; they are like three colours of a stained glass window through which one can look at the UECBE. Shifting our perspective a little would make one colour more striking, but all the colours are still present. However, because of the structure of this paper all three areas will be dealt with separately while still trying to keep all the 'colours' in mind.

I am aware of the complexity and breadth of the chosen theme and material. Questions arise even with terminology. Only with certain reservations can we speak about 'Baptist history' and 'Baptists' during the above-mentioned period in Estonia. The Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia was a united Union bringing together churches of different Free Church movements and traditions.¹ When I use terms like 'Baptist history' and 'Baptist churches' then, actually, the history and churches of the UECBE are meant.

¹ In the present paper the term 'Free Churches' or 'Free Church movements' denotes evangelical denominations like Baptists, Evangelical Christians Free Church, Pentecostals, and Revivalist Free Churches (*priikogudused*). Revivalist Free Churches (*priikogudused*), with their spontaneous worship style and openness to the 'leading of the Spirit', were born in the western part of Estonia during a spiritual revival in the 1870s and 1880s. In the Estonian context, all the above mentioned movements reject governmental affiliation, and emphasise regeneration, personal sanctification, evangelism, authority of the Bible above tradition, the role of the laity in church life, and voluntary covenanting of believers.

Also, the breadth of the theme needs explanation. Except for some chapters and passages in more comprehensive works,² and some scarce articles, the history of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia still remains largely a *terra incognita*. A general picture still needs to be painted. This is the reason why choosing a broader approach for this paper is, I believe, justified.

Forced blessings of unity:

Estonian Evangelical Christians and Baptists join the All-Union brotherhood

The Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia was founded in 1945. It united different Free Church traditions. Two of them, the Baptist and Evangelical Christians Free Church tradition, were probably the strongest, but Revivalist Free Church (*priikogudused*) spirituality, and Pentecostal beliefs and practices should also be mentioned. It should be noted that at the end of the 1930s the Estonian Pentecostals had mostly merged with the Evangelical Christians Free Churches and the Revivalist Free Churches had joined mainly with the Baptists.³ But there is no doubt that – in spite of some organisational merging – most of the individual Christians and churches still held to the views and practices of the tradition in which they had grown up.

In May 1945 the leadership of the newly formed UECBE made a decision to become a part of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists (AUCECB).⁴ Some remarks about the events in 1945 should be presented here. After a delegation of four representatives from Estonia⁵ arrived in Moscow in August 1945, negotiations took place with Jakov Zhidkov, Alexander Karev and other Russian Evangelical Christian and Baptist leaders. Discussions concentrated mostly on the theological issue of baptism. According to pastor Arpad Arder's memoirs, the union of Estonian churches joined the 'Russian union' 'without pain' due largely to Osvald Tärk's opinions and advice.⁶ Tärk was highly respected among Estonian Baptists, and can probably be considered as the most influential theologian of Estonian Baptists during Soviet years.

It is clear that the State was very interested in this process of unification both at regional and All-Union level: it was much easier to

² For example, parts in *Istoriija evangel'skih hristian-baptistov v SSSR* (Moscow: AUCECB, 1989). See also Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1981).

³ Ingmar Kurg, "Kristlikud uskonnad ja organisatsioonid tänapäeva Eestis" in J Gnadenteich, *Kodumaa kirikulugu* (Tallinn: Logos, 1995), p.116.

⁴ *Istoriija evangel'skih hristian-baptistov v SSSR*, p. 234.

⁵ The delegation consisted of the following persons: J Lipstok and O Tärk represented Baptists, V Nurk represented Pentecostals and J Laks represented Evangelical Christians Free Church.

⁶ Arpad Arder, *Kus on Arpadi kuningas?* ([Tallinn], Logos: 1992), p. 94.

control a more unified and centralised religious organisation. Vello Salo, an Estonian Roman Catholic theologian and church historian, does not doubt that the campaign to bring Free Churches together into the Union of Evangelical Christians and Baptists was started with the aim 'to place the Free Churches under government control'.⁷ There might have been an additional hidden agenda. The atheistic aims of the State are described by an Estonian Baptist pastor as follows: '...their idea was to put them [Free Churches] all together, then they [Free Churches] will start fighting with each other, and we [the State] can liquidate all the sectarians more effectively... this was the program of the Soviet Union in religious matters...'⁸ At least this was how several pastors and ordinary church members understood the situation.

Johannes Laks, an outstanding preacher and pastor of the Estonian Evangelical Christians Free Church, says in his memoirs: 'The end of the Second World War brought along many new orders and restructuring in the activities of the believers' church. The largest and most far-reaching was organisational reform. The orders prescribed that all congregations (religious societies) existing in Estonia, like Baptists, Revivalist Free Churches, Pentecostals and Evangelical Christians, should join the Evangelical Christians-Baptists Union in Moscow. These religious societies that failed to fulfil this demand within a certain period of time would lose their right to operate and would be closed down.'⁹ Robert Võsu, Elder Presbyter of the UECBE 1970-1985, says more cautiously, allowing the reader to read between lines: 'In the changed situation there remained only this possibility to work: to operate in the framework of the All-Union ECB brotherhood.'¹⁰ However, *The History of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the USSR*, published in Moscow in 1989, discreetly bypasses the aspect of state-initiative – or rather state-orders – in this uniting process. Rather, the theological vocabulary of Christian unity, love, peace and mutual understanding is emphasised.¹¹ In the same way these events were presented to local unions and to local Christians during the Soviet period.

In spite of the fact that the formation of new organisational patterns was to a large extent initiated and guided by the vision the State had for Free Churches in the Soviet Union, the result of the events forced Estonian Christians to rethink, re-emphasise and reaffirm basic characteristics of their identity. Positive opportunities were also opened up by belonging organisationally to an All-Union 'brotherhood'. The spirituality of Slavic

⁷ Olaf Sild, Vello Salo, *Lühike Eesti kirikulugu* (Tartu, 1995), p.152.

⁸ Interview with Uudu Rips (20.04.2000).

⁹ Johannes Laks, *Mälestusi eluteelt ja töömaalt* (Toronto: Toronto Vabakoguduse Kirjastus, 1965), p.81.

¹⁰ Robert Võsu, *EKB koguduste ajalugu* (1959), p.154.

¹¹ *Istoriya evangel'skih hristian-baptistov v SSSR*, pp.232-233.

Free Churches became better known to Estonian Baptists through personal contacts and translated materials in spite of the restricted circulation of even typewritten writings.¹² Alexander Karev, Jakov Zhidkov, and later Alexei Bychkov and other Russian leaders became well known names in Estonia, at least among Baptist pastors and active church members. Theological influence was bilateral. Osvald Tärk, Oskar Olvik and Robert Võsu from Estonia became highly respected as theologians and spiritual leaders among Russian-speaking Baptists.¹³ Tärk and Võsu published their series of writings in *Bratskii Vestnik* (e.g. in the 1970s and in the 1980s: Tärk's *Expository Commentary on Mark*, and Võsu's *The Sermon on the Mount*).

As to the formation of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists, in a way the government pressure accomplished what Evangelical Christians and Baptists in Russia were not able to accomplish in the 1920s when serious attempts were made to unite the two movements.¹⁴ The lesson that Estonian believers often mention when speaking about the united work and service is the lesson of love and respect for other Christians who have a slightly different theological emphasis. There is no doubt that this lesson needs to be continuously learned.

In Estonia, despite certain theological tensions, the new Union helped to overcome the tremendous human and material losses caused by war and by a wave of emigration in autumn 1944. Robert Võsu has summarised the situation at the end of the 1940s: 'After the Second World War it became clear that the time of war had had a devastating effect on the churches. Many prayer houses had been destroyed in the fires of war and several preachers had been killed or taken away from their homeland in the confusions of war. Membership numbers were down approximately 30% and instead of the former 15,000 members there were now approximately 10,000 members for four Free Churches together.'¹⁵

Surprisingly enough, the government that tried to achieve control over the Free Churches actually made the united Union in Estonia much stronger than if it had remained functioning in fragmented religious groups. However, the UECBE met new challenges and problems. Atheistic work in the Soviet Union was aimed to diminish both the numbers and the role of Christians in society. There were certain tensions created by different theological understandings that now were forced to exist side by side in a

¹² AUCECB periodical *Bratskii Vestnik*, published in Moscow in the Russian language, remained 'a useless or unreachable tool' for most of Estonian ECB church members and pastors, either because of the limited number of copies or because of the language barrier.

¹³ Interview with Alexei Bychkov (03.07.2000).

¹⁴ *Istoriia evangel'skikh hristijan-baptistov v SSSR*, pp.194-196.

¹⁵ Robert Võsu, *EKB koguduste ajalugu* (1959), p.154.

new union of churches. Robert Võsu states in 1959 in a rather optimistic tone: 'The work in the united Union has developed peacefully. The membership numbers have stayed at more or less the former level during the last 15 years. Differences between congregations have almost entirely disappeared. The spiritual course of development has become steadier, deeper and wider. Differences between congregations have mutually strengthened and completed the Union.'¹⁶

One gets the impression that Võsu is expressing 'a public and pedagogical optimism'. As an influential church leader and an analytical person, he must have been well aware that in reality the differences between congregations of diverse historical background were quite deeply rooted in people's minds and in their patterns of behaviour. As the coming years proved, the membership in the UECBE showed an accelerating tendency to decline, especially after 1960. According to data given to the Commissioner of Religious Affairs in Estonia, the total number of members in the UECBE in the beginning of 1946 was 9875.¹⁷ The Annual Reports of the UECBE show that at the end of 1959 there were 89 churches with a total membership of 9306. At the beginning of 1970 there were 83 churches and 8206 members. On the 1st of January 1980 the number of churches was 79 with total membership of 6822, and on the 1st of January 1989 there were 78 churches with total membership of 5870.¹⁸ In 43 post-war years the UECBE lost approximately 40% of its membership.

At the 1989 Annual Conference (December 9-10, 1989) the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia made a decision to continue as an independent Union¹⁹, still maintaining friendly relationships with the AUCECB. The name of the denomination was changed slightly: the Union of Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches of Estonia.

Survival Techniques:

Relationships between the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia and the Soviet State

During the communist period the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia shared the same fate as other churches. All churches were suppressed. However, Free Church Christians, often referred to simply as Baptists,²⁰ were pictured by official atheistic propaganda as dangerous

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *The Director of the Elder Presbyter's Office of the UECBE to the Commissioner of Religious Affairs in the Estonian SSR* (18.4.1947). Theological Seminary Archives.

¹⁸ *Annual Reports 1961, 1971, 1981, 1990*. The Archives of UECBE.

¹⁹ Riho Saard, "Eesti kirikute juhtivvaimulikkond läbi aegade," *Akadeemia* 3 (1998): p.612.

²⁰ The same tendency can be seen continuously. The Union of Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches of Estonia has a Baptist identity in the eyes of Estonian people.

and/or unintelligent. In the Soviet Union, churches were considered as ideological and political ‘enemies’. The goal by the political powers was to uproot religion. At the same time, the relationship between the State and the Churches was not static. In certain instances after the Second World War, a slightly more tolerant attitude could be noticed. Under certain circumstances churches were even considered as political ‘partners’ – especially in Soviet efforts to secure trust in the Soviet system from the international community. Promoting the peace movement also became a part of these relationships. However, the church was officially doomed to death after it had fulfilled its task for the benefit of the political system. It is important to note that the Soviet system did not want simply to eliminate religion, but to use religion for reaching its own goals. This was also one of the tactical goals of the Soviet Secret Service (KGB).²¹ H Leon McBeth, speaking about Baptist history in the Soviet Union, puts it as follows: ‘Through the twentieth century, the Communist government has changed its tactics many times but has never swerved from its announced goal to stamp out all religion and to create an atheistic society.’²² This was certainly true of the situation in Estonia, too.

Vello Salo has defined the State-Church relationship in Soviet Estonia during 1940-1941 as ‘the-rude-fist period’, and the period after the war as ‘the-fist-in-a-velvet-glove period.’²³ No doubt the years after Stalin’s death opened up for churches some new opportunities and relative freedom on a very restricted scale, only to revert to more severe propagandistic suppression methods at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. In spite of some fluctuations and changes in the intensity of atheistic propaganda and in the modes of suppression, it can be said that all through the Soviet period the development of atheistic methods can generally be described as shifting from primitive and physical suppression towards more refined, psychological and moral methods of suppression. This was accompanied with atheistic propaganda in the mass media and education. Christians were isolated from public life as much as possible.²⁴ This description can be applied to all Christian churches, Baptists included.

Already during the Second World War an institution of the Commissioner of Religious Affairs was established by the State to keep an

²¹ This is convincingly shown in Indrek Jürjo’s study about the relationships between Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church and the KGB. Indrek Jürjo, *Pagulus ja Nõukogude Eesti: Vaateid KGB, EKP ja VEKSA arhiividokumentide põhjal* (Tallinn: Umara, 1996), pp.151-179. It should also be pointed out that during its history the Soviet Secret Service had many names, only in 1954 it became called the KGB; in this article KGB is used as a general term for Soviet Secret Service.

²² H Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), pp.809-810.

²³ Olaf Sild, Vello Salo, *Lühike Eesti kirikulugu*, p.136

²⁴ See also Olaf Sild, Vello Salo, *Lühike Eesti kirikulugu*, p.163

eye on and to influence the churches, but also to collect statistical data. There was a Department of Religious Affairs in Estonia, too. The Commissioner had considerable power to control religious life; he received reports with data about church personnel and membership, church buildings and church inventories. He was entitled to ask for any additional information. The Commissioner gave permission for presbyters' meetings or for printing. In reality, printing religious literature was practically forbidden. For example, a yearly calendar remained for many years the only printed Christian publication among Baptists in Estonia.²⁵ The calendar included only information about dates.

Surprisingly, in some cases the local city governments were even more active in suppressing and persecuting Christians than higher structures. In some cases the Elder Presbyter of the UECBE turned to the Commissioner asking for solutions to local problems, as in the case of the small Muhu Baptist Church. The congregation had held meetings and services in the presbyter's home, and then the presbyter's family needed the room. However, the local government did not give permission for the congregation to meet in another place. Their argument was formally based on sanitary concerns: there was not enough air in the new prayer-room. The Elder Presbyter, on the other hand, argued that in the new prayer house there was even more air than when they were meeting in the Presbyter's home.²⁶

The KGB had a special department for collecting information about churches and doing 'operative work' with Christians. In several cases the KGB tried to recruit agents from among Christians. However, it was probably not an easy task among Free Church Christians. Estonian historian Indrek Jürjo refers to a KGB report in 1956, where it is said that 'a special psychological approach is needed to recruit sectarians, among whom there are many religious fanatics...'²⁷

Trying to break the atmosphere of conspiracy was the 'survival technique' that Christians used when interviewed by KGB. For example, Baptist pastor Uudu Rips, when interviewed by a KGB officer, promised to

²⁵ In 1957 Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church was allowed to print its first publication since 1944, the EELC yearbook. However, most copies were sent abroad, to give an impression that it is possible to publish Christian literature in Estonia. Next EELC yearbook was printed only in 1982. Riho Altnurme, 'Die Estnische Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in der Sowjetunion (bis 1964)' in *Estland, Lettland und Westliches Christentum*, ed. Siret Rutiku and Reinhart Staats (Kiel: Friedrich Wittig Verlag, 1998), p.243. In 1975, *Evangeelsed Laulud (Evangelical Hymns)*, the hymnal for the UECBE was printed. According to R. Võsu the permission for printing the hymnal had been requested in 1947. *R. Võsu to the Commissioner of Religious Affairs in the Estonian SSR* (19.01.1970). Theological Seminary Archives.

²⁶ *The Elder Presbyter of UECBE to the Commissioner of Religious Affairs in the Estonian SSR*. (No date). Theological Seminary Archives. The letter was probably written in 1959.

²⁷ Indrek Jürjo, *Pagulus ja Nõukogude Eesti*, p.161.

tell his Elder Presbyter about everything he had told the KGB officer.²⁸ However, much more complicated and in some cases not so 'clear-cut' relationships occurred too. The whole area of the relationships between the KGB and Free Churches in Estonia still waits for impartial and objective historical research.

The Elder Presbyters themselves, standing between the State and the Church, were often in a very difficult position; in a way they were between the hammer and the anvil. Their role was to 'soften' the first attacks from the authorities, and at the same time to present information and act in a way that made it possible for local churches and the Union to operate as 'smoothly' as possible in the atheistic context. This is one reason why an Elder Presbyter's role was very important during Soviet times. Local church presbyters were vitally interested in having close and good relationships with the Elder Presbyter, who had a lot of information about Church-State relationships not available to others.²⁹

As has been mentioned before, the years immediately following Stalin's death in 1953 were a time of relative freedom and new activity for churches in Estonia, only to be changed to a new wave of suppression and propaganda beginning with the last years of the 1950s. A new atheistic method was to introduce 'substitutional ordinances', e.g. non-Christian funeral ceremonies. Special efforts were made for moulding young peoples' minds in the spirit of atheism.³⁰

Johannes Kähr, later a Baptist pastor in Tõrva, a small town in the Southern part of Estonia, was expelled from Tartu University twice; first in 1950 because of 'religious propaganda at the university', and later in 1959.³¹ In some cases it was difficult for a witnessing Christian to find a job, especially in the field of education and in leading positions. Certainly other restrictions continued: no Christian youth and children's work was allowed, churches were required to pay higher rent and electricity rates, pastors could not receive a state pension, and churches were forbidden from social work or any other 'visible' or 'public' activities.

As later years showed, the atheistic efforts proved to be successful from a statistical, a sociological and a psychological point of view. By the end of the 1950s and 1960s, a new generation was born that had no personal experience of political independence or religious freedom.

²⁸ Interview with Uudu Rips (20.04.2000).

²⁹ Interview with Joosep Tammo (10.07.2000). Joosep Tammo worked in the office of the UECBE in the 1980s, and was the President of the UECBE 1992-1998.

³⁰ Riho Altnurme, 'Die Estnische Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in der Sowjetunion (bis 1964)' in *Estland, Lettland und Westliches Christentum*, pp.244-245.

³¹ *Lühike ülevaade Johannes Kähri eluloost*. Interview of Johannes Kähr to Tarmo Kähr. Manuscript (10.05.1995). T Pilli's personal archive.

Generally, they were much more easily influenced by atheistic propaganda. The younger, and more critically-minded generation emerged only later. This may be one reason why the generation in their 40s and 50s is very poorly represented in Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches in Estonia today.

In the 1970s and the 1980s the State maintained more or less the same repressive routine, while in the 1980s the atheistic efforts and restrictive measures began to lose their momentum. Vello Salo has classified these periods as follows: 1974-1981 'the-fist-in-the-velvet-glove period' (continued), 1982-1987 'the-fist-losing-its-strength period', and 1988-1991 'the-feeble-fist period'.³²

As a conclusion it should be said that in order to survive, Estonian Baptists kept a rather low profile in their relationships with the State. However, in some cases their 'survival techniques' included passive resistance, for example, ignoring some restrictive orders. Such resistance involved the personal courage of leaders and individual Christians. The role of an Elder Presbyter as a key person in creating a general framework for the union churches to operate, should not be forgotten. The exchange of information, sometimes among the 'inner circle', about possible KGB interviews or other measures taken by the authorities, helped to avoid a suspicious atmosphere. The atmosphere of trust was not always easy to maintain. It should also be stated that for many believers, contacts with authorities were an opportunity to witness, sometimes with words, sometimes with behaviour. In spite of restrictions, evangelism efforts were not lacking in the life of ECB churches in Estonia. It is simply that the emphasis was shifted more towards personal relationships, and towards life-style-evangelism.

Outreach Efforts:

Balancing Between Allowed and Forbidden

Pastor Heigo Ritsbek, who was involved in ministry in the Estonian Methodist Church during the Soviet years, has said: 'In Estonia we had practically no underground churches, but all churches had underground ministries.'³³ This statement describes well both the Church-State relationship, and churches' outreach efforts. The Estonian Baptists tended to be loyal citizens, as far as this did not contradict their ethical values and consciousness. There were some small groups of Christians doing fairly regular underground work, mostly among Russian-speaking believers. At

³² Olaf Sild, Vello Salo, *Lühike Eesti kirikulugu*, p.166.

³³ Quoted in Jyrki Raitila, *History of Evangelicalism and the Present Spiritual Situation in Estonia*. MA thesis (Providence Theological Seminary, 1996), p.41.

the same time Estonian Baptists valued highly the freedom to believe and to practice their faith. This included witnessing to their beliefs in deeds and words, and living a biblical lifestyle. Often a certain tension, even contradiction, was involved when both of the principles – loyalty to the authorities and religious freedom – put their demands on an individual Christian.

Certainly, almost the only legal evangelistic method was a worship service in a church. Evangelistic services and revival weeks with a focus on inspiring sermons, often accompanied with choir music, were the most common ‘public’ outreach tools. Baptists had a long tradition of having revival weeks as a means of outreach. In 1940 the president of the Baptist Union in Estonia, Karl Kaups, even criticised the churches that relied too much on revival weeks, neglecting a Christian’s personal mission responsibility.³⁴ Nevertheless, in a situation where Christian activities were mostly restricted inside the church walls, this method proved to be vital.

In spite of restrictions, Baptists tended to use various situations for mission and evangelism. Home visits, communion to the sick, and even funeral ceremonies were turned easily into evangelistic meetings. Youth services or Sunday schools were forbidden, but gatherings at homes under the guise of a ‘birthday party’ were difficult to be controlled by state officials. In this respect, ‘the Baptists proved to be more persistent than Lutherans’.³⁵ ‘Sometimes they openly defied the authorities, despite various sanctions such as fines or the suspension of a minister’s/leader’s work permit.’³⁶ It should also be emphasised that the role of a Christian home was especially significant during these years, helping to grant both a certain continuity in theology and tradition, and being an important source from where new church members came.

Music turned out to be one of the most important means of evangelism during Soviet years. It was culturally relevant, as Estonians have been known as a nation of singers. It was also relatively difficult for the authorities to control the impact and effect of music and singing.³⁷ In many cases, the energy of Christians was channelled to music ministry: with choir music becoming predominant. Christian parents often sent their children to music schools, hoping that their children would use these skills later in churches.

³⁴ *Teekäija*, 7/8 (1940): p.12.

³⁵ Jyrki Raitila, *History of Evangelicalism and the Present Spiritual Situation in Estonia*, p.44.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ According to Veronika Arder, who was active in music ministry in Tallinn Oleviste Church and in Rakvere Karmel Church, the authorities made an attempt to forbid solo songs and instrumental music in churches (except organ music) at the end of the 1950s. However, this period lasted only a short time. Obviously, the power of music was stronger than atheistic bureaucracy. Veronika Arder, *Muusikatöö võimalused Olevistes*. Manuscript (No date), p.6. A copy in T Pilli’s personal archive.

The Soviet propaganda was very much targeted at young people; youth were deliberately guided away from spiritual matters and church life. In spite of this, in an atmosphere of disappointment in politics and in stagnated social structures, as well as in their search for meaning in life, the youth started increasingly to ask religious questions. 'Renewed interest in religion was reported in the Soviet Union in the 1980s, especially among young people. Some did not hesitate to call this a religious revival and noted that it included some members of the Communist Party.'³⁸ This is certainly true of Estonia, although interest in religion among youth was already present in the 1970s.

In the 1970s, youth camps started to be organised by more active ECB churches in Estonia. The camps were illegal. 'Usually they were either organised in secret or with an unofficial 'silent agreement' with local officials.'³⁹ In some cases organisers were fined, interviewed by the KGB or harassed in other ways. In other cases, however, the authorities seemed to prefer not to take such severe measures. This can be an example of how Baptist leaders and Baptist churches were able to have an impact on the authorities, even if the authorities never admitted it publicly. The Elder Presbyter was first and foremost responsible for these unofficial youth gatherings. If the Elder Presbyter was respected and trusted by the authorities it might have happened that the authorities, being informed of these events, decided not to take any action; they 'looked at it through their fingers', as an Estonian saying goes.⁴⁰ Youth camps served as a means of spiritual growth and evangelism. Asking one's friends and schoolmates to participate in these camps was natural. I remember my own renewed commitment to Christ in a camp organised by Pärnu and Haapsalu Baptist youth in the summer of 1976 or 1977. Estonian Baptists were creative in fulfilling their inner calling to reach people with the Gospel.

In the 1970s a new music style reached the Estonian Free Churches. In the Methodist Church, a youth 'band', *Sela*, was formed. In the largest ECB Church of Estonia, Oleviste Church, an ensemble and ministry team, *Effattaa*, opened an entirely new era of evangelism and prayer ministry efforts, with regular '*Effattaa* evenings' that included music, sermons, testimonies, invitation time, and prayers for the sick; to a certain extent in

³⁸ H Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, p.809.

³⁹ Jyrki Raitila, *History of Evangelicalism and the Present Spiritual Situation in Estonia*, p.45.

⁴⁰ The fact that not only did the State have an impact on Churches, but the Churches, too, were able to have an impact on the authorities, has been pointed out by Joosep Tammo to the present author. Tammo remembered how in the first years of Estonian regained freedom the former Commissioner of Religious Affairs, Kalju Oja, paid a courtesy visit to the office of the UECBE in Tallinn. Tammo interpreted it as a sign of deep respect and good will. 'When Oja became the Commissioner, he was known as a 'fighting atheist', and brothers expected hard times for churches. In reality, these 'hard times' did not come', said Tammo. This was, at least, partly due to the respectful relationships the Elder Presbyter had with the Commissioner. Joosep Tammo to Toivo Pilli (10.07.2000).

line with Oral Roberts campaigns. In the 1970s the *Effattaa* 'meetings' took place both in Estonian and in Russian, as many people travelled from different places of the Soviet Union to attend the services. Haljand Uuemõis, a member of Oleviste Church Elders Board, calls the movement 'Effattaa-Revival'.⁴¹ The *Effattaa* movement existed approximately thirteen years (1968-1981), with a rather long preparation period included.⁴² There is no doubt that the State authorities felt quite uneasy about these tendencies – and not only the State authorities. One of the biggest controversies in the UECBE took place in the 1970s and 1980s, not just over the issue of music and worship style, but mainly over the issue of charismatic spirituality versus traditional spirituality. Under the heavy pressure of authorities the 'Effattaa evenings' in the Russian language concluded in 1981. 'This decision was hard and painful, and meant – as it soon was realised – a blow to the whole revival process...'⁴³

In the framework of growing interest in youth work in the Estonian Baptist Churches towards the end of the 1970s, a new tradition was born: Youth Bible Days. The leading organ of the UECBE, the Council of Presbyters, mentions this in its minutes.⁴⁴ The tradition of Youth Bible Days is still alive in Estonia. In the 1980s there were often 300-400 participants in the Youth Bible Days. These gatherings, usually taking place in some Baptist Church in Tallinn, offered fellowship, spiritual guidance and encouragement. They helped Baptist youth to relate better to the context of everyday life as Christians.

In spite of new efforts in evangelism and spiritual enrichment by the UECBE, the local churches' outreach methods were predominantly restricted to church buildings. This is why personal evangelism was continuously an important vehicle for the Gospel. While the leader of the UECBE, Robert Võsu, strongly emphasised the importance of personal evangelism and the Christian life-style. His book *Isiklik evangelism* (*Personal Evangelism*) circulated as a typewritten manuscript among church members, and Võsu developed the theme of evangelism in many of his speeches.

One more event should be mentioned here. In 1984 Billy Graham visited Estonia and preached in Oleviste Church, the historical building being packed with people; many well known persons influential in Estonian cultural life were present at this evangelistic service. This event was meaningful as a mission opportunity, but also as an event of spiritual encouragement which was certainly symbolic for Baptist identity in

⁴¹ Haljand Uuemõis. *Effattaa-ärkamine*. Manuscript (No date), p.1. A copy in T Pilli's personal archive.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid, p.4.

⁴⁴ Minutes of the Presbyters' Council of the UECBE (May 23, 1979). The Archives of ECBUE.

Estonia. Baptists gained more publicity by Billy Graham's visit. In the 1970s and the 1980s many of Graham's books were translated into Estonian, even without any hope of publishing them officially. Elder Presbyter Robert Võsu admired Billy Graham's evangelism style, as well as his conservative and Christ-centred approach in doctrine and preaching.

The mission efforts of the UECBE did not take place in a vacuum or in a neutral environment. There was always a certain tension between evangelism efforts and a need to survive, avoiding too severe sanctions from the State. Such was the case in the decision-making process to close down the *Effattaa* evenings in the Russian language in Oleviste Church.⁴⁵ The restrictions from the government also moulded evangelistic methods, driving them towards personal and lifestyle evangelism, or keeping these efforts inside church walls. At the same time, the authorities were not able to control the whole range of creative outreach efforts. It is possible that in some cases, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, the authorities preferred to follow the course of events, only interfering when the Christians' activity reached a critical point. When exactly the 'critical point' was reached often depended on the interpretation of some officials.

Search for Identity:

Some Theological Discussions and Attempts to Give Theological Education

There is no doubt that both the relationship with the State and outreach efforts formed the identity of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia.

Joosep Tammo, the UECBE president 1992-1998 and a long-time pastor in Pärnu Immanuel Church, stated in 1989 that for the Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches in Estonia the central spirituality was originally formed around the personal relationship with the Lord. Later two emphases developed: some believers emphasised their personal relationship with Jesus Christ and others with the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ A rather simple and straightforward understanding of the Bible, an emphasis on faith being effective in practical life, minimal attention to cultural activities, social work focusing on individuals, a search for fellowship, and the place of strong leaders – these are some predominant characteristics of the UECBE.⁴⁷ This is also generally true today. Nonetheless, some of these characteristics are changing or searching for new forms. For example, the role of leaders is gradually changing in a new situation of political freedom

⁴⁵ Haljand Uuemõis, *Effattaa-ärkamine*, p.4.

⁴⁶ Joosep Tammo, *Kesköö on päeva algus. Jutulused* (Tallinn: Eesti EKB Liit, 1998), p.31.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

and democracy, the leaders' authority becoming less dependent on their formal position and much more on their personality and spiritual qualities.

Already in the early years of the UECBE, identity problems were raised. The Union was forced to face questions about theological priorities, especially in ecclesiology, as Baptist and Evangelical Christians Free Church members had different views on baptism and church membership. Also the political context had a strong impact on the identity and priorities of the newly formed Union. To search for a new identity in an officially atheistic society was an entirely new task for the UECBE. There are many aspects that are worth analysing in this respect, but only two of them will be dealt with here in a more detailed way: different views on ecclesiology and the role of theological education in the process of searching for identity.

The Estonian Evangelical Christians Free Church did not require baptism by immersion as a prerequisite for church membership. In practice this meant that many members of the Lutheran Church who had experienced new birth could become church members in an Evangelical Christians Free Church on the basis of their infant baptism. If they asked for believer's baptism, they were baptised by immersion. The crucial point, where the decision about the need of the believer's baptism was made, was in the individual believer's conscience, not in the church's teaching or in the midst of the believers' community.

The theological discussions about baptism were an important issue in the meetings in Moscow in 1945. According to Johannes Laks, who represented the Evangelical Christians Free Church views in these meetings, the spirit of the meetings and method of treatment was 'without any blame'.⁴⁸ Realising that this was an inevitable precondition for future co-operation, and after prayerful consideration, J. Laks agreed with the principle of believers' baptism as a requirement for church membership. 'To those who had still remained on the basis of infant baptism the attitude must be respectful and one should try to convince them that they should let themselves to be baptised in faith, this was the solution and suggestion by the Moscow brothers,' says Laks.⁴⁹

It took years before the controversy about baptism and communion was settled in local Churches, especially when the authorities managed to force churches of different theological views to form a new united local church. This was the case in Tallinn, when Oleviste Church was formed from eight Free Churches representing different historical traditions, and also in Pärnu Immanuel Church. In Tallinn, for a long time, two

⁴⁸ Johannes Laks, *Mälestusi eluteelt ja töömaalt*, p.81.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.82.

communion services took place, one for former Evangelical Christians Free Church members and another for believers of Baptist principles. One can only imagine the severe disharmony between the biblical idea of the Lord's Supper and the practice of two separate communion services within one local church body. However, the leaders, Oskar Olvik and Osvald Tärk, were committed to fellowship, Christian unity, respect and love. Oskar Olvik, while keeping Evangelical Christians Free Church principles, was open-hearted enough to suggest baptism by immersion to a prospective church member. 'If God has made it clear to you, then you have to be obedient to Him,' was Olvik's comment.⁵⁰ Gradually differences were overcome.

As has been said, both Evangelical Christians and Baptists defined the future spirituality of the UECBE. Formally, the role and importance of these two movements was emphasised in 1945 by the fact that the Elder Presbyter of the Union came from Baptist circles, and the Deputy Elder Presbyter came from Evangelical Christians Free Church circles.⁵¹ In 1947, Voldemar Nurk, former member of the Pentecostal Church, is mentioned as an Assistant to the Elder Presbyter,⁵² but his role was never influential and his presence at the Union office was temporary. The question remains: did the UECBE and its leadership pay enough attention to the spiritual and theological contributions that the Pentecostal and Revivalist Free Church traditions were able to offer?

In the course of time Baptist ecclesiological principles and practices became common, in spite of the fact that at the local level the worship service style, or some other Christian views and practices, could differ from local church to local church. The reasons for the vitality of Baptist theological emphases are varied. There is no doubt that the pattern from Moscow was copied, at least to a certain extent. In addition, the Baptists were the only Free Church in Estonia that had given systematic theological education at seminary level in the 1920s and 1930s. This is one reason why their doctrine proved to be more vital. Baptist pastors like Osvald Tärk and Robert Võsu played an important part in forming a theological picture of the UECBE. They were not only preachers, but also men of letters. Ability to express thoughts in a written form must not be underestimated. Unfortunately, the role and extent of the phenomenon of typewritten manuscripts in communicating religious ideas in the Soviet Estonia has not yet been studied properly.

⁵⁰ Arpad Arder, *Kus on Arpadi kuningas*, p.86.

⁵¹ Johannes Laks, *Mälestusi eluteelt ja töömaalt*, p.82.

⁵² *J Lipstok to the Commissioner of Religious Affairs in the Estonian SSR* (11.04.1947). Theological Seminary Archives. Lipstok informs the Commissioner that the registration process of Antsla ECB Church has been delayed because Voldemar Nurk has not checked the data. Lipstok has reprimanded Nurk.

The leaders of the UECBE had to deal with identity problems from both practical and theological viewpoints. One of the most detailed theological surveys about Evangelical Christian and Baptist identity and principles was written by Osvald Tärk at the beginning of the 1980s.⁵³ He points out the following aspects as central to the UECBE: the New Testament as foundational for the churches' beliefs and practices, the principle of the believers' church, personal relationship with God and personal responsibility before God, the important role of baptism and communion as ordinances given by Christ, and, last but not least, religious freedom.

An important tool in the search for the identity of Estonian Baptists was theological education. Baptists were forced to close their Theological Seminary in 1940, when the Soviet occupation began, but theological education was highly valued among Estonian Baptists. Indeed Baptists were the only Free Church in Estonia that had made efforts to give systematic theological education before the Second World War. The benefits of these efforts became visible after the 'hard times' began: many of the graduates gave their life's work in Baptist Churches during the 1940s-1980s. The search for theological knowledge involved new tasks and aims in the changed situation. Gatherings for biblical training offered the possibility for fellowship, the exchange of information, and guidance in matters of behaviour and teaching.

In 1950, Elder Presbyter Johannes Lipstok, in his letter to the Commissioner of the Religious Affairs, asked permission to organise a brief theological course for presbyters.⁵⁴ The intended teachers were outstanding ECB leaders: Oskar Olvik, Osvald Tärk, Robert Võsu, Johannes Lipstok, Johannes Laks and Aleksander Sildos. Themes included the pastor's personal qualities, preaching and church administration, biblical knowledge including exegesis of Colossians, a survey of church history and the history of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the Soviet Union. As the times required, four hours were to be spent on studying the Soviet Constitution, taught by Nikolai Levindanto, who served as an AUCECB superintendent for the Baltic region. I have not found any evidence if permission was given and if the course took place or not, but the effort itself shows the priorities the UECBE leaders had in these years.

In the slightly more 'loosened' atmosphere of the first years of Nikita Khrushchev's reign, the UECBE took the initiative to start Theological Distance Courses for presbyters. In October 1956 the courses started in

⁵³ *Logos* 1 (1981), 1-4 (1982), 1-2 (1983).

⁵⁴ *The Elder Presbyter of the UECBE to the Commissioner of Religious Affairs in the Estonian SSR* (13.01.1950). Theological Seminary Archives. The course was planned to take place March 1-10, 1950.

Tallinn with 40 students.⁵⁵ The studies included much independent work. Lecture sessions were organised systematically. The amount of study material and textbooks written, typed and rota-printed during these years is phenomenal. Oskar Olvik, Osvald Tärk and Robert Võsu wrote more than twenty theological textbooks, each approximately 100-150 pages of A4 format single space typewritten text. The course was intended to consist of two parts: a 2-year basic course, plus another 2 years for advanced studies. However, only one person was able to fulfil the requirements of the 4-year course.⁵⁶ Probably the students found it hard to find time both for systematical studies and the demands of practical work and ministry.

The Distance Courses finished in 1960, and were closed. There is no doubt that with the beginning of Khrushchev's atheistic campaign at the end of the 1950s the State authorities were interested in terminating the courses. Apparently the teachers, too, were exhausted by the heavy work load.⁵⁷ In spite of the short period of their existence, an important effort had been made, and the experience of the leaders and teachers of the Distance Courses later proved valuable at the All-Union level.⁵⁸ From 1957-1959 Distance Courses for Choir Conductors were organised in Tallinn. These courses were also planned for 4 years but finished after 2 years.⁵⁹

When Robert Võsu became Elder Presbyter of the UECBE in 1970, one of his priorities was to give study opportunities for Christian workers. He organised so-called Consultation Days in Tallinn for ECB presbyters. The Consultation Days took place once every month: the programme included lectures, questions and answers, and devotional times. Between 1973 and 1978 similar sessions were held also in Tartu. In the personal archive of Uudu Rips, a former presbyter in the town of Võru in the Southern part of Estonia, there are lecture notes that indicate the scope of the lectures: from exegesis to principles of personal evangelism, from homiletics to doctrinal questions, from Baptist teachings to ecumenical work. Robert Võsu also shared information about Christian life outside the Soviet Union.⁶⁰ This broadened the perspective of those whose communication with 'the world abroad' was restricted. It also gave them a

⁵⁵ *Decree of the Elder Presbyter of ECB in the Estonian SSR, no 187* (30.10.1956) Theological Seminary Archives.

⁵⁶ *Issanda aednik. Märkmeid Paul Himma elust*. Compiled by Uudu Rips (Tartu: Saalemi Baptisti Kogudus, 2000), p.25.

⁵⁷ Telephone interview with Ülo Meriloo (08.06.2000). Meriloo was a student on the courses, 1985-1992 the Elder Presbyter of the UECBE.

⁵⁸ In Moscow, on the level of AUCECB, Distance Courses for Biblical Studies were started only in February 1968. In April 1967, Osvald Tärk from Estonia, took part in a meeting for preparing the courses. Tärk held a discussion about the word of God and Christian calling, and gave advice about theological studies. *Istoriya evangel'skih hristijan-baptistov v SSSR*, p.269.

⁵⁹ Marika Kahar, *Muusikakursused Oleviste kirikus*. Manuscript (No date), 1. A copy in T Pilli's personal archive.

⁶⁰ *Lecture notes 1973-1978*. Personal archive of Uudu Rips.

stronger sense of belonging to a larger Baptist family. This type of study did not end with any formal certificate, but as an informal means it helped to create an emotional sense of belonging together, to keep doctrinal balance and to give guidance in pastoral problems.

In 1979 three Estonian pastors (Joosep Tammo, Peeter Roosimaa, and Ermo Jürma) were sent to Theological Seminary in Buckow, GDR. Back in Estonia, all three shared their 'German' experiences and knowledge in their preaching and teaching. Through their studies and personal contacts they became an important link between Estonian and German Baptist spirituality. Again, it was Robert Võsu who paved the way in the corridors of power to make this study opportunity possible for these future Christian leaders in Estonia. Thus typewritten literature⁶¹, shared spiritual experiences, rare personal contacts with Christian leaders from outside Estonia, informal fellowships and study circles⁶², and the model given by Estonian Elder Presbyters and pastors, helped to develop and form the identity of Evangelical Christians and Baptists in Estonia.

In the Soviet years the identity of the UECBE was formed in the context of atheistic society and political suppression. Probably some characteristic features of the Estonian Baptists even today (e.g. modest involvement in political and community life) are still inherited from the Soviet times. A survival-techniques approach has moulded the identity and spirituality of the UECBE. It has been pointed out that in spite of the variety of beliefs and practices in the ECB churches in Estonia during the Soviet years, Baptist ecclesiology became predominant over Evangelical Christians Free Church teachings, especially in the matters of baptism and communion. However, we cannot overlook the fact that the Revivalist Free Church and Pentecostal traditions had some influence in the spirituality of UECBE. Certain tensions between Christ-oriented and Spirit-oriented, or word-oriented and experience-oriented spirituality are still present. During the Soviet years there were constant attempts to give theological training for pastors and active church members. The leaders of the UECBE were aware that theological education had a role in unifying the churches and forming the sense of identity both at doctrinal and spirituality levels.

⁶¹ Besides original works and translated volumes, Baptists made attempts systematically to publish typewritten collections of articles or 'publications' that resembled Christian journals. For example, the typewritten publication *Logos* appeared six times a year from 1981-1988. In the 1970s and 1980s also a collection of philosophical, theological and cultural texts were collected in several volumes under the title *Lectio*.

⁶² For example, so called *Haraka Instituut* in Pärnu. This was an informal group of young men with intellectual and theological interests in the 1970s. 'Haraka' is the street name where the initiator of this fellowship, Joosep Tammo, used to live. Later, a similar fellowship gathered also in the university town, Tartu.

Conclusion

The story of the history of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia from 1945 until 1989 is a story of a united Free Church movement whose people joined together to continue their ministry in a context of atheistic restrictions in Estonia. The history of the UECBE can be analysed from three aspects: survival techniques, outreach and search for identity. These three facets should be seen as belonging together, having a mutual relationship and dynamic. The Estonian Baptists' relationships with the State had an impact on outreach efforts and identity. At the same time, steps taken to preach the gospel, or to understand Evangelical Christian and Baptist identity, took place in the framework of an atheistic society. However, the Baptist Churches and the State had an impact on each other. Baptists, as represented by their leaders, were able to gain some respect in the eyes of authorities, and in some cases it was possible to expand the parameters of Christian service. In many cases, nevertheless, the attempts to organise children's Sunday Schools or Christian youth camps, to give theological training, or to produce Christian literature happened under the threat of possible State sanctions.

Two movements, the Baptists and the Evangelical Christians Free Church, entered in 1945 into the new situation of the Soviet era as rather strong Free Churches in Estonia. Their theological emphases, especially in questions of baptism, communion and church membership, did not coincide. In the process of theological development, Baptist ecclesiological principles became more widely accepted. Baptist theological views were effectively represented and taught by Osvald Tärk and Robert Võsu, who expressed their doctrinal positions both in oral and written form. The role of typewritten literature, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, must not be underestimated. Attempts to give theological education helped to shape the sense of unity and awareness of identity in the UECBE.

In 1988-1989 a new phase arrived in the history of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia. In an atmosphere of *perestroika* and emerging hopes for political freedom, new opportunities were opened for churches. A Baptist monthly magazine *Teekäija* (*The Pilgrim*) started again to be published on a regular basis, now as a printed publication. The Theological Seminary as a successor of Baptist Theological Seminary (1922-1940) was reopened in 1989. Children's and youth work began to flourish. How ready was the Union for all these new opportunities? How effectively did the local ECB churches and the church members adjust to the changed situation? These are questions that still wait to be answered.

The Revd Toivo Pilli is an Estonian Baptist pastor and Rector of the Estonian Baptist Seminary in Tartu. At the seminary he also teaches homiletics and

Estonian church history. He is a member of the Society for Estonian Church History. For the past three years he has been Vice-President of the Estonian Baptist Union. Toivo Pilli has a ThM from the University of Tartu, the first part of which researched Estonian Baptist history up to 1940 and the second part analysed how Baptist theological views developed. He is currently engaged in PhD studies through IBTS, examining the experience of Estonian Baptists during the communist period.

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Professor Volf has published and edited nine books and over sixty scholarly articles. Among his important books are *Toward a Theology of Work* (1991) and *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (1998). His most significant book is *Exclusion and Embrace* (1996), in which he reflects on conflicts raging around the question of identity. Mary McAleese, the president of Ireland, wrote to Professor Volf in response to this book that 'there is no better way for our two countries to go forward than pursuing the difficult path of embrace'.

If you wish to take advantage of this opportunity to hear Professor Volf delivering his lectures at IBTS, Prague, and want to book accommodation at the seminary, please contact White@ibts.cz

JAMES WM. McCLENDON, JR
A PARTICULAR BAPTIST THEOLOGIAN¹

‘I am a denominationalist and particularist; there is no theology-in-general, only the theology which consciously or otherwise springs from engagement with a particular community.’

— James Wm. McClendon, Jr

Introduction

Jim McClendon died on the 30th October of last year, at the age of 76. As he lay dying, with a heart that would no longer sustain his body, he received what to him was a great gift. He was able to hold the published version of *Witness*, the final volume of his three-volume systematic theology.² More than once he worried that he would not finish this life’s work before he died. That he did finish it was not only a gift to him but also to the many readers who will benefit from the completion of this work. But long before this last volume was published, McClendon’s work was being recognised for its significant contributions. McClendon wrote seven books during his lifetime, three of which were re-issued in second editions. He edited several others. In May 1993 the Lily Endowment (an American Charitable Trust) funded a symposium around the second volume of McClendon’s systematic theology. During two lively days of discussion at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, fourteen papers were read and discussed by more than fifty participants in this ‘Congress on Systematic Theology in America Today’. In November 1994, in a session at the American Academy of Religion meeting, Abingdon Press sponsored a gathering at which the book, *Theology Without Foundations*, a collection of essays, was presented to McClendon, honouring him during his seventieth year and at the completion of forty years of teaching.³

Jim McClendon has clearly been, and continues to be, an influential theologian. I can in this brief essay barely hint at some of his contributions. I will discuss them under three rubrics: his contributions as an ecumenist, as a baptist, and as a Baptist.

¹ This appellation is chosen quite consciously to imitate McClendon. Small ‘p’ ‘particular’ is on the one hand to disassociate him from the Baptist denomination with this name. But as the quotation below the title indicates, Jim McClendon was not a generic sort of Baptist. He was a particular kind of Southern Baptist.

² James Wm McClendon, Jr, *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Volume I* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986; 2nd ed. 2001); *Doctrine: Systematic Theology, Volume II* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994); *Witness: Systematic Theology, Volume III* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000).

³ Stanley Hauerwas, Nancey Murphy, and Mark Nation, eds., *Theology Without Foundations: Religious Practice & the Future of Theological Truth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994).

As An Ecumenist

Jim McClendon was, until the day he died, a Southern Baptist; Jim McClendon was until the day he died a firmly committed ecumenist. For him this combination produced no contradictions. Already, by the late-1960s, McClendon thought that he ‘had gained possibly the widest-ranging teaching experience of any living American theologian: the schools [he] had served were Southern Baptist, Roman Catholic . . . , secular, Episcopalian and . . . ecumenically Christian’.⁴

There are three things I would say about McClendon’s contributions to the world of ecumenical Christian theology. First, and not at all unimportant, McClendon has made a (Southern) Baptist theology less detestable to many outside of the Baptist world. In the U.S. it is sometimes said that a Methodist is a Baptist who has learned to read. This ‘joke’ trades on a negative stereotype of (especially Southern) Baptists. Jim McClendon has challenged this stereotype. Many reviewers have noted not only the elegance of McClendon’s prose but the depth of his thought. Many have recognised that McClendon’s writings reflect mature, informed thought that is unapologetically Baptist. That this is true and that McClendon was until the day he died, quite happily, an ordained Southern Baptist minister not only says something about McClendon as an individual but serves, one can hope, generally to challenge the unfair stereotyping of Southern Baptists.

Second, as a Baptist, McClendon has contributed substantially to recent shifts in the theological world. In fact, in some important ways, McClendon was ahead of his time. Already in the mid-1970s he was contributing to the articulation of a form of narrative theology and ethics as well as articulating a non-foundationalist philosophical rationale that set the stage for writing unapologetic or postliberal theology.⁵ Not only was he leading the way on these matters, but unusually McClendon wrote and taught quite competently in three sub-disciplines: philosophy of religion, ethics, and dogmatics. His thinking on these subjects culminated in his three-volume systematic theology, written from the mid-1980s until the year 2000.

A third, not insignificant ecumenical contribution of McClendon is the diversity of the theological progeny he produced, the scholars he helped

⁴ James Wm McClendon, Jr, ‘The Radical Road One Baptist Took’ *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* LXXIV (October 2000): p.507.

⁵ James Wm McClendon, Jr, *Biography as Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1974; 2nd ed., Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1990); James Wm McClendon, Jr. and James M Smith, *Understanding Religious Convictions* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975; 2nd ed: *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994]).

to shape. That he thought this to be one of his significant contributions is indicated by the fact that he listed a number of his former students in his own résumé that he wrote toward the end of 1997. Among his students were Nancey Murphy, McClendon's widow, who specialises in philosophy, theology and science, teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary⁶; Michael Goldberg, a rabbi and author of several books⁷; Theophus Smith, an African American theologian teaching at Emory University⁸; Terrence Tilley, a Roman Catholic, the chair of the theology department at the University of Dayton and the author of a number of books⁹; Charles Scriven, the president of a Seventh Day Adventist college in Washington, D.C.¹⁰; and Ched Myers, noted author, lecturer, and peace activist.¹¹ And this is only to mention some of the more noted among those whom Jim has mentored.

As a baptist

There are many ways to write Baptist theology. Beginning at least as early as 1974 McClendon learned to write his Baptist theology in conscious dialogue with the baptist tradition. McClendon used the term (small 'b') 'baptist' usually to refer to the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement, although he sometimes uses the term to refer to the broader 'believers' church' or 'free church' tradition.¹² He intended the term to signal a rootedness in the more radical stream of Christianity that usually emphasises serious discipleship lived out in Christian community, implying, among other things the sharing of possessions and a commitment to nonviolence.¹³

⁶ Murphy is the author of numerous articles, co-editor of a number of books and the author of five, including the award-winning, *Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

⁷ His books include Michael Goldberg, *Theology & Narrative: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991) and *Why Should Jews Survive?* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁸ Among his writings is Theophus Smith, *Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁹ Author of more than five books, including most recently Terrence Tilley, *Inventing Catholic Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000).

¹⁰ He is the author of Charles Scriven, *The Transformation of Culture: Christian Social Ethics After H Richard Niebuhr* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988).

¹¹ He is the author of numerous writings, the best known of which is Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).

¹² For a discussion of the 'believers' church' tradition see Donald F Durnbaugh, *The Believers' Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism*, 2nd ed. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1985).

¹³ One manifestation of McClendon's desire to name this tradition was in serving as a co-editor of a reader: Curtis W Freeman, James Wm McClendon, Jr, and C Rosalee Velloso da Silva, *Baptist Roots: A Reader in the Theology of a Christian People* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999).

McClendon's commitment to a baptist sort of theology was strengthened over the years by his close friendship with and reading of the writings of John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas. In fact McClendon says that Yoder's well-known book, *The Politics of Jesus*, changed his life and his way of doing theology.¹⁴ Undoubtedly this is so, and yet McClendon was already moving in Yoder's direction. For in the mid-1960s he was made redundant from a teaching post at a Southern Baptist theological college for raising funds to send a student to march with Martin Luther King, Jr. from Selma to Montgomery. And in the late-1960s he was again made redundant, this time from a Roman Catholic University, for organising students to take out a full-page advert in the San Francisco newspaper against the war in Vietnam. Along with Yoder and Hauerwas, McClendon sought over the years to articulate his views in a way that was baptist. That is to say, he sought to integrate these commitments to peace and justice into an overall vision of what it meant to be church and to hold Christian convictions. Of course what he did that neither Yoder nor Hauerwas have done is to mould these views into a systematic whole.

As a Southern Baptist

In 1978, as he was anticipating some changes in his future, Jim McClendon said: 'I would consider testing my own thought again in the home fires, and perhaps even being in name, as I have never ceased to be in fact, a Southern Baptist theologian'.¹⁵ Without question McClendon never ceased being Southern Baptist. Anyone who knew him could not miss his genteel manners and accent that revealed his roots in Shreveport, Louisiana. And although his theology was quite deliberately written for a broad ecumenical audience and rooted in the baptist tradition, McClendon never intended it to be something other than Baptist theology. He really did believe that there could be no 'theology-in-general'. And although various congregations had nurtured him over the years, he never forgot his connections to the Southern Baptist world. What other broadly ecumenical theology, published in the year 1994, named Southern Baptists W. T. Conner and E. Y. Mullins as conversation partners?¹⁶

Furthermore, especially in recent years, segments of the Southern Baptist world have come to embrace McClendon. There are many younger Southern Baptist theologians in the U.S. who have been encouraged and influenced by McClendon's writings. In recent years he presented lectures in several Southern Baptist colleges and theological colleges, including a

¹⁴ *Ethics*, p7.

¹⁵ James Wm McClendon, Jr, 'A Decade of Deeds and Dreams: My History Continued, 1969-1978', Unpublished paper, p. 2. In possession of author.

¹⁶ See McClendon, *Doctrine*, pp58-60.

recent appointment as guest professor at Baylor University. Furthermore, Baptists (and baptists) around the world have recognised the importance of McClendon's work. In the spring of 1998 he conducted a two-week speaking tour for the Anabaptist Network in the United Kingdom, during which he spoke at a number of Baptist venues. The most recent issue of the Baptist journal in the United States, *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, is dedicated to McClendon's work.

McClendon made many contributions to the academic disciplines of philosophy of religion, ethics, and doctrine – which, in McClendon's thought cannot finally be separated from each other. What is extraordinary is that all of his academic writing is done to serve the life of the Church and it manages to be simultaneously ecumenical, baptist, and Baptist. Only someone as gifted as James Wm. McClendon, Jr. could accomplish this feat. Thanks be to God for the gift that he was and that his writings continue to be.

Mark Thiessen Nation, Programme Director of the London Mennonite Centre, is the co-editor of four books, including *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999) and *Faithfulness & Fortitude: In Conversation with the Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000).

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BOOK REVIEWS

Michael H Taylor

Poverty and Christianity

SCM Press, London 2000 - ISBN 0 334 02814 0 - Price GBP 10.95

This book by Professor Taylor, a Baptist who is Professor of Social Theology at the University of Birmingham, comes out of his reflection on teaching theology for many years at the Baptist College and University of Manchester, followed by over a decade as Director of Christian Aid, the major aid and development agency of the British Protestant churches.

His starting point is the questions raised for theology by the terrible examples of world poverty and genocide he experienced at first hand in Africa, Asia, Central and South America. He explores the normality of suffering in our world and the issues that has raised for theodicy. Here he reflects on the theological explanations provided by various western and southern theological thinkers. Dr Taylor examines, in a careful way, the realities of sin and the failure of Christian writers and activists to make a

major impact upon these wide-scale problems of drought, flooding, disease and war. His approach is to offer examples of narrative theology and to look afresh at ways we do social ethics and practical theology.

This is a sober book reminding us of the dire state of our world at the beginning of the 21st century. Yet it concludes with a strong affirmation of hope – based on Jesus of Nazareth and his life, understood as Participation, Confrontation, Solidarity and Sacrifice. He calls us to believe that the world has possibilities and that transformation is the child of such hope; the hope which declares that all things can be made new.

This is a stimulating book which challenges us in our practical theology.

The Revd Keith G Jones
Rector, IBTS



Linda Wilson

Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality amongst Nonconformists 1825-1875

Paternoster Biblical and Theological Monographs, Carlisle, 2000
ISBN: 0-85364-972-2 – Price GBP 24.99

If well over 60% of the community of believers in the churches of Europe are women, then we might reasonably assume we still have much to learn about the faith and actions of the Christian church in our continent as most books and records concentrate on the life and work of those men engaged in prominent leadership. We are clear already that the kitchen was a key scene for the imparting of faith and the nurturing of the next generation of believers. In this study Linda Wilson provides helpful information and analysis of the role of women in free churches beyond the domestic scene, distributing tracts, evangelising and raising money more effectively than men.

This is not an account of selected women of prominence, but rather good insights into many women within the free church tradition who were involved in the work of local congregations and often played key roles in developing the life and work of not only the local church, but theological colleges and regional organisations.

This is a significant work which will contribute greatly to our understanding of the role of women in the free churches in Britain during the 19th century.

The Revd Keith G Jones
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